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IN THE STUDIO.



IN THE STUDIO

A DECADE OF POEMS

BY

SEBASTIAN EVANS

AUTHOR OF "BROTHER FABIAN'S MANUSCRIPT," &c.

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

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JONES AND CALYPSO.



JONES AND CALYPSO.

A MONOLOGUE IN THE STUDIO.

So, once more, my redoubtable painting,

We'll battle it out, you and I !

In spite of your fencing and feinting,

I swear to be master or die !

What ! your cunning shall baffle me ? Shall it ?

Set your back to the easel and see !

Mark me ! War to the knife—of the palette !

No Frankenstein nonsense for me !

No, my picture, I mean to achieve you,

Yea, sell you, perhaps—and buy shares,

If indeed, I don't royally leave you,

Encodicilled safe from my heirs,

To the Gallery whence in defiance
Pepper-Castor and Pollux astare
Look askant on the column and lions
Through the haze of the squirts of the Square.

Oh, I know all your tricks, to my sorrow,
How you gird at your maker, and grin !
Well, it mayn't be to-day nor to-morrow ;
Who cares ? I can wait and can win.

Yet I own that a spirit more tricky
No wizard e'er spelled from the spheres :
Never Will-o'-the-Wisp, Puck or Pixie
Led a thornier dance through the breres.

Talk of spirits departed, out raking,
Invading our ceilings and floors ;
Not a whole neck-and-cropolis waking
Could play me such antics as yours !

One day, o'er my matins Manilla,
I see through the smoke-eddies' curl
How you show me a skinless gorilla
Where I fancied I painted a girl !

On the limbs of my gracious she-presence
I had dreamed I caught splendour and sun ;
You display me the blue iridescence
Of muscular veal, underdone !

I wax wroth : 'tis the pestilent weather !
This fog would make saffron look blue !
I re-glaze you : there's nothing like leather ?
Saint Luke, but there is ! and 'tis you !

With the tints of a tea-rosy dawn, I
Re-glaze you again before dusk :
Next day you're a fine foxy-tawny,
With a skin like a husk or a rusk !

Yet again, with my model to study,
Fighting shy of the yellows and blues ;
You are clear of them both. You're pure muddy,
With a patch on your cheek like a bruise !

Well, who cares ? Ere I finish the figure,
My chameleon turn-coat, at last,
Spot of leopard and swartness of nigger
Shall be printed in colours less fast !

No, my Proteus, you quit not my fingers
Till you tell Aristæus the whole :
Till you chant the last secret that lingers
Untold in the deeps of your soul :

Till you sing me how Art hath a story
For all, yet for each one alone ;
Like a rainbow, for all shedding glory,
Though each sees a bow of his own !

I can wait till I win. All the trouble
Shall bloom in repose at the end ;
All the glazing and scumbling thrice double
I grudge not, to make you or mend.

He did it, my Titian did it !
He glazed, painting into the glaze ;
Glazed again, again painted, and hid it
Yet again with a radiant haze ;

Working on, till he showed you like Nature
Life's flame shining out through the skin,
All the outlines and forms of the creature
Lit up by the spirit within.

Not the trick of the trowel and plaster
To prove that his handling was free,
But the trick of the genuine master,
The trick that no mortal can see.

Aye, the deftest of all cheiromancy
Is a Titian's sleight with the brush ;
But the "handling" your critics so fancy
He valued at less than a rush.

Yes, for all that is greatest in painting
The secret of secrets is work :
'Tis your little Great Master, who, fainting,
Casts about how to seem not to shirk.

True, the rudest of strokes tells you clearly
The artist who can from who can't :
But in Art, 'tis the master not merely
Who can, but who does, that we want !

Was it wrong, when old Fubsey, the dealer,
Came ferreting over my way,
To leave you about as a feeler,
To hear what mine ancient would say ?

“Har,” quoth F, “going in for the Grecian?

Classic, hay? Well, your model ain’t bad :
And your colour—a shy at Venetian?

You always was fond of a fad !”

Was it wrong to explain : “ This young person
Is Calypso, once reckoned divine :
Highly mentioned by Homer, whose verse on
The subject is thought rather fine.

“ This is how she appeared when she parted
From an elderly gent in the Guards,
Whom she kept seven years, and then started
To his wife with her kindest regards.

“ Poor young thing, you can see how acutely
She feels it, her happiness wreckt !
Homer gives the costume, too, minutely,
Which vastly improves the effect !”

“Hm !” says Fubsey, “Next time you’re a-doing
A pot-boiler, take my advice,
And don’t go a-fretting and stewing
On subjects as won’t fetch the price.

“But you’re always for fads ! They don’t answer :
They’re all well enough for mere lads :
But for *you* ? I’m a practical man, sir,
The market’s too risky for fads !”

Was it wrong to respond : “Yes, precisely,
But suppose I’ve an object in view ?
My Fubsey, thou reasonest wisely,
But what’s a poor devil to do ?

“Suppose, now, I wish to be famous ?
Don’t you think I should get my R.A. ?
I allow I’m a mere ignoramus,
But isn’t this picture the way ?”

“Har,” says he, “well, I know what you are at, now,
Though I don’t see your way over clear :—
The R.A.—Yes, there’s something in that, now,
As good as two thousand a-year !

“I like a young feller to hanker
For fame as will help him to sell :
When fame is hard cash with your banker,
Why, in course, to be famous is well.

“It’s your grand, high-falutin’ vagaries,
Your Haydons and that, as I hate :
Fools as fancy the world out o’ square is
Because it don’t reckon them great.

“There’s yourself, now, at times. What a bother
You make with your Titian and such !
Michael Angelo, this, that, and t’other,
High bosh of high art in High Dutch.

“ Lord ! It ain’t as I don’t understand your
Tall talking : He’s great, Michael A !
But I tell you, his grimness and grandeur
Aren’t articles likely to pay !

“ Look’ee here ! Since I first took to dealing,
There’s a dozen at least made a name :
I don’t paint, but I’ve got the right feeling,
And I’ve noticed they all did the same.

“ It’s the manner, sir ! Manner’s the ticket
That brings in the grist to their mills :
Why, all over their pictures they stick it
As plain as the stamp on Parr’s pills.

“ Never mind what it is ! Don’t be queasy !
Only yours let it be,—no mistake !
And, mind ! It must come to you easy,
Or you can’t do the work that you’ll take !

“ Ev’ry canvas as comes from your easel
Must speak in the clearest of tones ;
So that even the ’bus-cad who sees ’ll
Say straight without book, ‘ That’s a Jones !’

“ Look you, Tibbs—he can’t paint worth a copper,
But he’s just got the manner as pays ;
Why, he’s twice as much grist in his hopper
As he’ll grind all the rest of his days !”

Wouldst thou teach me, my Fubsey, what Art is ?
Nay, prithee, the lesson forbear !
I can dine, I can dance at thy parties,
And learn the last Shibboleth there !

Why, Miss A. can expound me all Ruskin
As we swing from the whirl of a waltz ;
Lady B., of the statelier buskin,
Teach me Blake through the lancers by halts ;

Miss de C., like a seraph, but more so,
O'er a spoonful of pine-apple ice
Can in confidence tell me the Torso
Isn't Theseus at all—but so nice !

My superfluous Fubsey ! The manner,
Past doubt, is the point to achieve.—
But which shall we follow—the banner
Of Doing, or Making Believe ?

I opine, if I puzzled my cranium,
Keeping always an eye on the till,
I could hit on a fine succedaneum
More paying, my Fubsey, than skill.

Say, for instance, I grandly demolish
Chiaroscuro itself, thick and thin :
From my canvas all shadow abolish
As a note of original sin ?

Bibbs has done it, and finds that it answers
In quasi-Greek figure and group ;
And a score or so young necromancers
Follow Peter Schlemihl in a troop !

Or suppose, with old Fibbs, the prodigious,
I leave Nature and Art in the lurch
For sham sentiment, semi-religious ?
Why, the game is as safe as a church !

Or with Nibbs, drop a tiny oasis
Of plot in a desert of scene ?
Or with Cribbs, grind eternal pink faces,
Like as sausages made by machine ?

Ah, my Croesus ! The butter and honey,
I grant you, are excellent cheer !
I profoundly respect ready money—
But why should I buy it so dear ?

God forgive thee, old Fubsey ! Poor sinner !

What a life ! Yet he fancies it sweet !

Nay, perhaps he may wake after dinner,

Musing, " Jones hasn't got such Lafite ! "

A mere puff-ball existence, divulging

No hint of leaf, flower, or fruit ;

Just a bulb of white fungus-pulp, bulging

Over wrinkles which serve for a root.

Yet, a gull not a whit less than guller,

Poor soul, he's a creed of his own ;

He believes that a pigment is colour,

That a varnish—God bless him !—is tone.

For the rest—tut ! he cares not a fico :

If he does, he prefers, I should say,

Mister Tibbs's fine gooseberry Cliquot

To the cream of my Titian's Tokay.

How politely the creature applauded

My novel devotion to Fame !

He was hardly more kind when he lauded

My "Two in Arquà"—for the frame !

Think of Fame *viâ* Fubsey ! How grateful

The glory reserved for the brave !

What is life worth, compared with a plateful

Of puffs from the fool and the knave ?

Fame at best ! Would you know what she is ? Mark

Yon photographs there in the shop :

Patti, Darwin, Anonyma, Bismark,

And the Siamese Twins up at top.

What ! You say, "Just a fugitive fashion ;

Notoriety, merely, not Fame ?"

Well, but stripped of all temporal passion,

How you will, the result is the same.

What of Homer's serene High-and-mighties
Whom he packed off to glory pell-mell ?
What's Achilles, pray, more than Thersites ?
Penelope better than Nell ?

Homer's self—was he one ? Was he many ?
Or compiled by some politic muse ?
True, the poems are greater than any,
But their greatest of glory is—whose ?

Yet he's greatest, we say. Who's to know it,
Grant him greatest that lives to be read ?
'Tis most like, the authentic Arch-poet
Lies forgot, with the rest of the dead.

Fame, forsooth ! A curator of dummies,
She herself but a dummy as dumb !
A Sphinx dropt asleep o'er her mummies,
Who will sleep though Belzoni may come.

In her dreams she can mumble of Pharaohs,
One Ramses, she stammers, was there :—
But the Titians, the Mozarts, the Maros
Of Memphis and Thebes—they are—where ?

With the River-drift Euripideses,
The Cavern-age Byrons and Scotts :
Reindeer milk-maiden Nilssens and Grisis,
The Pfahlbauten Smeatons and Watts !

Foot of stag, ear of hare, eye of vulture,
Nose of bloodhound once justly were fame :
Whose fame ? In the “progress of culture”
The gifts, too, are lost with the name.

Who's your Phidias palæolithic
Sketching mammoth from dawn to the dusk,
In an artist's fine frenzy pre-mythic,
With a flint on a fragment of tusk ?

Who, ah, who was the Pleistocene Milton,
Not inglorious, surely, nor mute,
When he pegged the first mutton-skin kilt on,
Singing "Man was not always a brute?"

Aye, or later, what Norseman Beethoven
Sang his love-staves in Opslö at Yule,
'Till the Hard-i'-rede Harold, heart-cloven,
Drank tears in his wine of Stamboul?

True, your Giotto wrought one campanile :
What Giottos, not Fame's, wrought the rest ?
Yet a Lincoln, a Wells, or an Ely
Had their Giottos as good as the best.

But, allow that the fleet-winged Romancer
Sifts at last the false work from the true :
Grant her trumpetings Gospel :—I answer,
'Tis greater to be than to do !

Yes, but being, you tell me, is doing,
None great, but he acts what he is :—
True, but Shaksperes when baking or brewing,
Don't achieve such a glory as his !

You may act, say, in this form or that form ;
You who act are not greater nor less :
But it lies in your choice of a platform
Whether Fame will ignore or caress.

Our Shakspere himself :—what we rave on
Isn't Shakspere—'tis only his robe.
He was greater at rest by the Avon,
Than at work in Bankside at the Globe.

No ! The Fame I should care for is only
When my hand has forgotten its art,
If some stout fellow-worker as lonely
Shall see what I've done and take heart.

Some wrestler, who, fighting it single,
Shall look on my work and find cheer :
Shall muse, all his pulses a-tingle :
“Aha, brother mine, art thou here?”

So shall gird him again to his fighting,
With a dominant plait of the brow :
“Brother mine, thou hast dealt me my knighting,
For this—to do better than thou !”

That's Fame ! What the deuce does it matter
Who does what there is to be done ?
Heaven bless us ! Why make such a clatter
Whether Tom, Dick, or I be the one ?

Well, and what if I'm known not for ever ?
’Tis a pity, perhaps—not for me !
Not for me ! I have done my endeavour,
Did I do it for gossips to see ?

Look you yonder ! A lion-heart Viking
Will win if he may to the Pole :
North, North ! ever dodging and tricking
The traps of the pack and the shoal.

North, North ! But the second December
Hears his tread never more on the deck ;
There he sits o'er the flickering ember,
By the snow-covered wrecks of his wreck.

His own gallant schooner, his darling,
Has been cracked like a nut by the floe ;
The bears, his sole neighbours, are snarling
O'er a comrade half-scraped from the snow.

All alone by the gnash of the surges
In the creeks of the caverns beneath,
Where the world from its uttermost verges
Looks out evermore upon death ;

And close, in the ice-fog abysmal,
As the last flicker dies to a spark,
Comes that snarl through the clash cataclysmal
Of icebergs atilt in the dark ;

He piles him a cairn from the lumber
To tell that he once has been there,
Gives his soul back to God ere he slumber,
And yields up his bones to the bear.

Let his peers follow North with their navies !
'Tis well, though they follow and fall !
Well for them if they find where his grave is,
For himself—he was there ! That was all !

He was there ! Yes, he wished they should find him,
As he died ere he deigned to despond :
He was there ! Might his brothers behind him
See his tomb, and go venture beyond !

And what, say his death-bed has drifted
Far South as he lay there asleep ;
That the thaws of the Gulf-stream have sifted
His bones on the floor of the deep ?

He was there ! Yea, though none through all ages
Shall know of his venture again :
He was there ! safe at least from the sage's
“ Poor fool, to go thither in vain ! ”

Yes ; he did what he meant to do duly,
For he meant but to do what he could :
A Plus Ultra in Ultima Thule
He raised—hath it perished or stood !

He was there ! Will ye seek in the Sistine
The cairn of a like lion-heart,
Builded high on the peaks amethystine
That point to the Pole-star of Art ?

Such an one, too, was there ! Do ye know him—

That soul who was taught of the Star ?

Him, who pictured that terrible poem

Up there with its burden : “ Thus far ! ”

Him, the Thaumaturge, shaping his will in

High riddles on ceiling and wall ;

Oracular, mystic, Sibylline,

The secrets of Life and the Fall ?

Him, Prometheus, the Titan, the fearless,

And his work—as of days ere the Flood,

Wrought in agony speechless and tearless,

And splashed with a sweat as of blood ?

Do ye know him, the man Buonaroti,

Him who watched by his Art as she fell,

With a brow that long since had grown knotty

Over eyes that had stared into Hell ?

Prate of Fame to that prophet of sorrow ?
For his toil promise glory untold ?
Nay ! As soon might the Sorcerer borrow
The gifts of a Peter for gold !

Not for him nor his like shall the Circe
Mix madness and blood with her wine !
She hath wooers enough at her mercy ;
Shall Odysseus go herd with her swine ?

Ha ! Come hither, Odysseus ! Calypso
Lives here on my easel again !
Thus she looked when she grudged you a ship so,
And wept when you talked of the main !

O Love ! Not the passion, the madness,
Stamping eld on the brow of the youth,
But the quiet, the calm, and the gladness,
Making eld ever young with the truth !

O rainbow, so subtle and tender,
Conjured up from the days that are done :
Thou that cheerest me still with thy splendour
When my path lies away from the sun :

Love of Beauty, for ever that heapest
Fresh flame on the shrine of the heart,
At thine altars the highest and deepest
Unveiling of Nature and Art !

In thy mysteries, Nature for ever
Is maiden in beauty and youth ;
Yea, though Art, overshadowing, leave her
Divinely the Mother of Truth !

Tush ! A truly terrestrial pigment
Is this on my canvas the while !
I must fain shut my eyes on my figment,
Would I see how Calypso can smile.

Now I see her, at home in her valleys,
Not a bird nor a blossom more free :
Singing sweet in the green hazel alleys :
Laughing out, catching sight of the sea :

Now she stops : 'tis the black-caps that whistle ;
Now she stoops : 'tis the plume of a jay,
Nigh a humble-bee drunk on a thistle,
Who gladdens her heart for a day.

My Calypso ! My maiden of maidens !
Fair as e'er was May-morn and as fresh :
All the grace and the glory that gladdens
In the roses revealed in the flesh !

O Voice up in Heaven, that greetest
The day till thy carol unborn !
O Sovran of all that is sweetest
In song of the springtide and morn !

O reverend Chaucer ! O hymner
All peerless of beauty and race !
O master ! O cunningest limner
Of joyance, and girlhood, and grace !

O Poet of youth ! Could I dip so
My brush in thy colour divine,
I would paint thee a canvas Calypso
As deathless as Homer's or thine !

My Calypso ! My girl at all issues !
My beauty, my passion, my dread !
If I paint thee, a fig for Odysseus !
Thou shalt make me immortal instead !

ARNAUD DE MERVEIL.

[AT THE ABBEY GATE.]



ARNAUD DE MERVEIL.

[AT THE ABBEY GATE.]

MAY I not sing, then? Do I ask too much?

Pray you, forgive me, Father! Yet I ween
No longer since than summer I could touch

My citole to a tune could charm a queen
To hear and crown me for the lays I wove:

Though well I wot, the tune of "Time hath been,"
Fair Father Abbot, hath less might to move.—

Yea, steel is strong, and gold more strong than steel,
And love than gold, and art more strong than love,

Yet 'tis not strongest! Nay, I live to feel
That a king's envy is more strong than art.—

We,—I and King Alfonso of Castile,
Were lovers of one lady—wherefore start?

I am a homeless waif, and only claim
A few hours' house-room for a broken heart :
Yet, Father, 'tis of right I set my name
Where she hath set my love—before the king's ;
For I am Arnaud de Merveil,—the same,
If aught remain the same of earthly things,
The same, none other—though I walk forlorn
And even the uplandish yeoman slights the strings
That shook five kingdoms now my robes are torn,
And deems a groat too lavish for my lay.
Father, I fain would rest me here till morn,
Being faint and footsore : pray you, let me stay !
By Him the Wandering Jew forbade to rest,
Send me not forth this night upon my way !
I crave no largess save to be your guest
For this one night—unless it be the prayer
Of these pure brethren for a soul distressed.—
I will requite you :—Mine are lays more rare
Than Bertrand ever babbled—Tush ! I boast
And am a beggar !—Yet if thou canst spare

One half-hour from devotion, good mine host,
And these fair brethren—who perchance have strayed
No farther from the cloister than the coast,
And less are wont in gallant masquerade
Of courts and camps than thou and I to stand—
Will deign to hear such music as I made,
I will essay a tale could once command
The ears of queens and kings in hall and bower—
Ho, boy, there! Give the citole to my hand!

Once, I remember, by the Garden Tower
Were three king's daughters playing at the ball;
I crossed the lawn, and plucked a lily-flower
And waved it as I strode. They knew the call
And followed, laughing: one had slipped her shoe
And stayed to right it nigh the pleasaunce wall.

Then sang I how a king's son went to woo
The Lady of the Waste Lands by the Sea,
Unweeting of the weird whereby she threw
Each morn her womanhood aside, to be

Till evening glimmered over brake and thorn,
A milk-white hind under the greenwood tree.

And all a summer day with hound and horn
By ford and fell he chased that spotless hide ;

Till, smit by shaft too sure, his love forlorn
Fled to a wild cell by the wailing tide

Mid spiky grass half-buried in the sand,
Where, peering through the casement-chink, he spied

A weeping breathless maiden, her right hand
Stanching an arrow-hurt on her round arm :

And in the sundown of that dreary strand,
Knew her he loved, and how he had wrought her harm,

And, shamed to threefold fondness by the feat,
Kissed her the kiss that snapped the baleful charm.

And then I sang them how a rustling fleet
Of cygnets sailing from the Norland fords

Stooped on a mountain mere one Mayday sweet,
Where, with a chanted charming of strange words,

The swan-skins fell from their white womanhood
Among the sunlit shallows. Then with swords

Men came to slay them, but the wailing brood
Donned once again their feathers and were gone

Into the sky, far from those men of blood,
Back to their Norland homestead—all save one,
That lost her swan-gear in the treacherous reeds,
And she so fair, so pitiful, that none

Of those rude sworders, swift to murderous deeds,
But fain would bear her to his town as bride.

And in their hearts, like wind among the gledes,
Love kindled wrath, and even from undern-tide,

Each fought on other till the sun was low :
And one alone among his peers who died

Was left to woo that Sister of the Snow.
And thus they wedded :—but upon a day

The swans again came sailing all arow,
And when they brought her wings to flee away,

There was no charm in love's sweet fellowships,
No kiss of spouse nor babe could bid her stay.

Then would I tell of one on haws and hips
Starving among the woods, an Outlaw bold,
To whom, the word sans pardon on his lips,
The fiend, Dame Venus, proffered wealth untold,
And fame and love at night to meet her there :
Withal she gave him drink from cups of gold,
And loosed a token from her golden hair :
He swore, but laughing at the oath he swore,
She turned and shrank into the wintry air.
And lo, at midnight, through the forest hoar,
When the dead walk and the sick moonbeam dims,
He came—but found the trysting-glade no more,
No more, no more ! Din of unhallowed hymns
He heard, and once among the groaning trees
That blinding beauty, those majestic limbs
Flashed for a moment—then, like surging seas,
A rout of huntsmen not of earth swept past ;
And in the morn, footing the peaceful leas,
The whistling charcoal-burner stopped aghast,
Stumbling upon a corpse—and straightway knew
What doom had dawned on that fond youth at last.

Yea, but the song my singing made all true
What time I summered by the sea i' the South
Last June, was that which silenced me and slew.
'Twas of a Princess, one in all men's mouth,
Fair Rosiphel—no rose so fair to see
In a queen's garden blooming after drouth—
The widowed king's one child of Armenye.
Yet, flower'albeit of peerless maidenhood,
For wealth, wit, wisdom, worth and sovereignty,
A world to woo her, would she not be wooed.
Heiress of all things save a heart to move,
As if there ran no woman in her blood,
All lore she loved save lore alone of love.
Never was peer nor prince nor duke nor king
Might win such grace as even wear her glove
For token on his crest knight-erranting,
Yea, though he spent a realm for such a meed,
And all the treasure East or West could bring.
Coldly she bade her wooers all God-speed,
As if too careless or to smile or scorn :

Let lovers live or die she took no heed,
But loved, feared, hated none of woman born.

She recked not, she ! One kingly-sceptred knight,
Who for her sake full oft had watched till morn,
Sought him a death more kindly in the fight :
“ All die,” she said : “ we, too, would fighting die ”—
And went her ways and loved her own delight,
Daring love’s noonday sun with phoenix-eye.

Till on a Springtide as she went a-Maying,
Joyous among her joyous company,
With singing, dancing, laughter and sweet playing
Some deal aweary, to a greenwood glade
Beside a brook she loitered, lonely straying
To rest her in the pleasaunce of the shade.

And at her feet she saw the bells of Spring,
And overhead horse-chestnut leaves that played
With open hands, and buffeted the wing
O’ the warm May wind come wooing through the shaw.
And ever among she heard the mavis sing

Loud to his mate how Love is lord and law,
And cushats coo how Love will woo by kind :
And proud beneath the forest oaks she saw
The red deer royal-antlered by his hind,
And o'er his pastures green the moody bull
With muttered thunder tramping forth to find
His silky-dewlapped mate beside the pool.

Yea, all the Spring had blossomed in her veins
Ere on her eyne a show more beautiful
Than Springtide' self among those greenwood lanes
Dawned on a sudden. Lo, by twos and threes
On palfreys ambling gay with tasselled manes
And housings pranked with needled broideries,
Rode forth a bevy of fair dames, more fair
Than all kings' daughters in all palaces :—
So lovesome all, so queenly debonair,
She clean forgot to greet them ere they passed,
And only woke to wonder what they were

Who o'er the greensward rode so proud and fast,
In state so royal and so rich array,
All red-rose-garlanded from first to last,
With kirtles rose and white of costliest say
And copes of damasked green, all clad the same
To glove, and boot, and girdle glistening gay.

But while she marvelled, lo, another dame,
In tattered russet weed unseemly rent
And loose locks crownless through the greenwood came
Spurring a gaunt-ribbed jennet, as if bent
To follow that fair cavalcade in haste.
Wan was her face, and ever as she went
A coil of halters dangled at her waist ;
Yet, stranger still than all that went before,
A golden bridle, rough with gem-work, graced
The golden bit her spavined stumbler bore.
Kindly, as one who could of courtesy,
The Princess spake : " Nay, spur not on so sore,
Sweet sister mine : no robbers' nest is nigh.

But prithee tell what be these dames so fair
Who ride our valleys in such sovereignty?"

That other answered: "These be they that bare
Spotless their maiden fame and wedded troth:

Who read aright their womanhood and sware
To Love our Lord and King the holy oath.—

Farewell, sweet friend:—my service calls me hence."
"Nay, sister," quoth the Princess; "we were loth
To lose thee thus, not knowing whom nor whence.

Gentle thou art, if I can read aright,

And by thy seeming void of all offence:
What chance hath brought thee to this sorry plight?
What be these halts? What thy service due?"

"Fair friend," she said, "I, ere I left the light,

Was Princess of Cathay and Cambalu:
But I was slow to learn Love's kindly lore:

Nothing I recked of tender hearts and true,
But mateless aye my maiden chaplet wore:

Therefore in this ungentle guise I ride,

Meet penance of ungentle crime of yore,
And mourn in death too late my living pride.
And when these ladies in the lusty May
Troop proudly forth upon the greenwood side
To listen to the sweet birds' roundelay
And from the Springtide quaff fresh loveliness,
I in these tatters follow their array
To hold their stirrups and their steeds to dress,
And bear, for Love our Lord decreed the doom,
These halters as their humble hostleress."

"Doth Love wreak vengeance then beyond the tomb?"

The Princess mused, but said : "I prithee tell
Why bears thy beast this bridle, or for whom?"

With that the damsel blushed, and a tear fell.
"Madam," she said : "one fortnight ere my death

I 'gan repent me that I did rebel
So long 'gainst Him who giveth all things breath.

There was a Minstrel in my father's hall,
Around whose brow full oft I had twined a wreath

More kingly than the king's own coronal
For braver words and kinglier than the king's,
And deeds as kingly in the tilt withal.
Yet never, till his hand upon the strings
Waxed faint, and faint the voice that sang so sweet,
And o'er him fell the shadow of the wings
So soon to bear him where no pulses beat,
Did I begin to love him, or to know
'Twas mine own crime had woven his winding-sheet.
But when within the fortnight he lay low,
I bade them bury me, who wrought such ill,
Beside him in the grave—and died even so.
Wherefore hath Love our Lord, who knew my will,
And that my love, though late, was very truth,
Granted me thus to ride by holt and hill ;
And gave for guerdon of my tardy ruth
This starry bridle which is all my weal.
Farewell ! To Love give offering of thy youth ! ”
So rode she forth, and vanished : “ Lo, I kneel,
Love, Lord, before thee, thine unworthiest slave,”

The Princess prayed, “ Lord, grant me now thy heal,
So may I bear no halters in the grave ! ”

Such lay I sang last year, and one who heard,
No longer infidel to true-love, gave

To him who sang the lay her plighted word :—
Yseult de Beziers—Father mine, dost hear ?

I say Yseult de Beziers hath preferred
Myself the Minstrel, or to prince or peer !

Yea, king Alfonso of Castile in vain
Whispered his witless wooings in her ear,
And vowed her half the palaces of Spain !
But kings are strong and cruel ! He, this king,
Would give Navarre to-day to have me slain !
But durst not slay me ! Look, this topaz ring
She bade him send in token he hath sworn
To harm me not nor kill, where'er I sing,
So nevermore I risk me to return
Within his marches nor nine leagues anear,
But dwell within the land where I was born—
She is Alfonso's love, and I—am here !

DUDMAN IN PARADISE.

DUDMAN IN PARADISE.

STRANGE stories bin there in mine Author's book ;

And much I marvel whether all be sooth :

For hugely he that made this tale mistook,

Or I, who weave it in my rimes uncouth

Do touching heavenly things false doctrine hold.

Yet speaketh he as one that speaketh truth ;

And, as a garment, that the Heavens wax old

And change, as saith the Psalmist, I believe—

Believe who list the tale mine Author told.

When Fulke Fitzurse deceased one Christmas Eve,

His neediest villein, Dudman, also died.

Most meritoriously the Earl took leave

Of this vain world with all its pomps and pride :

Clean shrift he made, and many a holy vow,
As Christian Earl became at Christmas-tide.

His soul he willed to Heaven : the out-lying plough
Of arable to Saint Werewulf's, with release

From fine or claim : Saint Werewulf holds it now.
Moreover, in expectance of decease

He made great oath that if God took him hence
He would with Ralph Grentmeynell die in peace,

And bear no further malice. Penitence
So full, said Bishop Wulstan, ne'er before

Gladdened the heart of angels. Forty pence
Bequeathed he also to relieve a score

Of crippled bedesmen at the Maunday dole,
Beside his gifts to Wulstan and the four

Who aye 'sing mass in chantry for his soul.
In brief, no temporal Earl e'er slipped his clay
With fairer claim to saintly gloriole.

Poor Dudman went less orthodox a way,
The churchmen all being busy with the Earl.

He prayed, indeed, such prayer as villeins pray,
And mused if Lazarus, too, were less than Churl :
And Cis, the goodwife, bade him be of cheer,
Because our Lady was no foolish girl,
And knowing, certes, that the pious Peer
Needed good father Roch to help him die,
Would make allowance, holding Dudman clear.

So died both Earl and Hind. With vigilant eye
What time Fitzurse's spirit should leave his lips,
His Angel and his Fiend watched hovering nigh,
And, as it shuddered forth like chick that chips
The encumbering egg-shell, each swooped down
amain
And clutched the prize—Hell, Heaven at tugs and grips.
In truth, the poor soul had been rent in twain,
And half flown up to Heaven, half down to Hell,
So fierce and yet so equal was the strain,
Had not Saint Michael—who had flown to tell
The Wardens of the Pit that certain ghosts

Might spend that Christmas-tide without their cell,
Just then, back-soaring from the dolorous coasts,
Espied the fray, and with celestial foot—

The foot that trampled on the Infernal hosts
In Heaven's first warfare, golden-sheathed, acute
With diamond toe-piece—spurned the yelping fiend
Prone through the void from the Archangelic boot
Six thousand leagues toward Limbo. "Had I
weened,"

He said, "that one so piously renowned
As my lord Fulke Fitzurse had been convened
To join our Christmas revels, I had found
An escort worthier his so high degree,
That long ere now had scotched yon pestering hound !
As 'tis, no worse is lucky." Thus the three,
Slow-footing, started toward the Eternal Gate ;
The Earl still somewhat stiff in hip and knee.

Dudman, the while, had died with none to wait
Either from Hell or Heaven to claim his sprite :

Poor souls like his being batched in six or eight
And given in charge, as 'twere a single wight,
To prentice-angels and to prentice-imps,
Who, like their wards, can scarce tell left from right,
Fiends, angels, souls scarce counted more than shrimps
Compared with those of nobles like Fitzurse.
So, when he died, the villein caught no glimpse
Of guide at all, for better or for worse ;
His ghostly warders, then five miles away,
Watching for ale-wife Sybil to disburse
Such soul as she possessed, not worth a fray—
And thus, lone-wandering, finding none to tell
Which road were best, he chose the upward way
For two good reasons : one, that paths to Hell
Lay always downward, so the Parson said ;
The other that the Earl, he knew full well,
Would never condescend, alive or dead,
To mingle with the rabble—argal, he,
Dudman, who spied his lordship just ahead,
Could scarce do less than follow. Of the three,

Moreover, those to left and right wore wings,
And one, at least, if mightier Earl could be
Than Fulke himself, seemed mightier Earl—which things,
He argued, left no reasonable doubt
As to the road toward Heaven. The only stings
That pricked him were misgivings lest the rout
In front should enter Heaven and spar the door,
Leaving himself, poor Hind, unblessed without.

Thus on they footed some three miles or four,
And as they paced, a joyous dawn-like glow
In front waxed bright and brighter evermore.
No need to tell whence that sweet sheen should flow,
For even the villein felt that aught so fair
Only the Lord's own Paradise could show.
And now, the last ridge mounted, o'er the bare
And desolate waste of rocks and desert sand
They hailed the City of God with silent prayer.
Clear shone the inviolate walls on either hand,
League after league, a girdle as of Morn :
Golden, their gold was of the Sinless Land,

Self-lustrous, roseate—not the dross forlorn

That only to the living seems divine,

But ore in Eden, not in Ophir born.

And o'er the bulwarks, builded as of wine

Smitten to stone, they saw tall citadels

Of crystal in interminable line

Cresting the scarp, and broad-winged sentinels

Tramping full-armed between in twos and threes

On pathways paven as with lips of shells ;

And, crown of all celestial mysteries,

Spiring in sunbright splendour o'er the whole—

The temple-palace where God sits and sees

Flashed rainbow-wrought—the eternal capitol

That veils the ineffable shrine and throne above,

And fills the land with glory, as the soul

Within makes lovely the bright eyes we love.

That light the City's life-blood seemed to be,

And swift throughout with living pulse to move.

And now the four drew nigh. “Guests, one, two, three,”

Reckoned Saint Peter, with a triple blast

Upon his bugle : “ One of them, I see,
A stranger and a noble ”—for the last,
Dudman, who slunk behind the Archangel’s wing,
If seen, was not worth counting. Thus they passed
On to the drawbridge—Dudman, with a spring
Lurking so close behind the giant stride
Of Michael, hugest captain of the King,
That neither angel nor apostle spied.
Poor villain, how he trembled ! He, unshriven,
Unblest, to thrust him that great lord beside,
A Saint, nay, Earl, with all his sins forgiven,
And these dread gentle folk with wings so white !
Still, men will make strange shifts to win to Heaven.
And Dudman was no craven, though the fright
Shook all his limbs like ague. So they came
Under the archway to the Gates of Light.

The Saint—who hath not heard Saint Peter’s fame ?
The Janitor of Heaven—by bugle-call

Of a soul's advent having made proclaim,
Shouldered his key, and from the embattled wall
Descended to the portal. Straight, a clang
That shook like thunder, yet more musical
Than sweetest hymn Saint Cecily e'er sang
To intervals of organ psalmody—
A burst of trancing sound, through Eden rang,
As now revolving, Heaven's imperial key
Traversed the maze of amethystine wards
And rolling back the diamond bolts, set free
The aye-inviolable Gate that guards
The glories of the Paradise of God.
Then with a sweep like Doom's, which nought
retards
Nought speeds, the eternal Door swung wide, and
showed
Free access to the Lord's own Holy Land.
Yet not to enter that divine abode
Even Michael willed, before with outstretched hand
The Saint gave blessing, and then bade rehearse

The style of him for whom he did demand
Passport so priceless. “’Tis my Lord Fitzurse,”
Quoth Michael : “ never yet did Earl evince
Such piety as he, when he waxed worse
Ten days before he died.” The Apostle-Prince
Smiled with benignest unction as he blessed
The lordly Pilgrim. “’Tis a se’nnight since
My lord,” he said, “ we heard of your bequest
To fair Saint Werewulf’s house, and your good will
Toward even Sir Ralph so gracefully expressed—
’Tis to be hoped that your last codicil
May, ’spite all tyrannous mortmain-law, stand good :
Wulstan, I doubt not, will his trust fulfil
As one who knows what ’tis to wear a hood.
Enter, my Lord Fitzurse ; within you’ll find
Glad welcome to our Christmas Interlude.”
Quoth Fulke with low obeisance, “ ’Tis most kind !
If e’er my aid may serve you, pray command !
To friend or foe Fitzurse ne’er came behind.”
Then, right and left, an angel hand-in-hand,

Into his birthright forward stepped the Earl,
In Heaven itself a freeman of the land.

Meanwhile, the villein, all his wits a-whirl,
Still crouching low behind the Archangel, crossed
Heaven's threshold that same moment. "Ho, Sir
Churl!"

Thundered Saint Peter, as he spied the ghost
So deftly skulking in Saint Michael's wake ;
"Who taught your Churlship manners?" All seemed
lost !

Just as the dawn of heavenly bliss 'gan break
Upon his night of life, and every sense
Waxed keener, in perfection to partake
Of joy beyond all earthly joys intense :
Just as he first breathed air of Paradise
Fragrant with odorous balm and frankincense ;
First heard the chant of angel symphonies,
First saw Heaven's inward splendour—thus to hear
That terrible voice chide in such awful wise :

“Out, out, vile serf ! Dost dream that Heaven makes
cheer

For hinds and villeins ? Think you this the place

Where slaves like thee may sit with kings as peer ?

Off, ere I ban thee, off !” With rueful face

The villein eyed the Saint from top to toe,
And, seeing he bore no staff, took heart of grace :

“Sir Janitor,” quoth he, “three hours ago,
’Tis true, I was a villein, but the cock

Which called me forth to labour with his crow
Ne’er smote my conscience with so smart a shock

As that which crew when thou deniedst thy Lord !
And now why He, thy Master, called thee Rock,

Full well I see, for well thy words accord,
Thou stony-hearted ! Yet will I not stir !

Against my God ne’er spoke I treacherous word ;
And much I marvel why He should prefer

So false a follower thus to ward His door !”

The Apostle quailed before the villager.

Athwart a thousand years uprose once more

That eve of judgment in the High Priest's hall,
That third denial, those false oaths he swore,
The cock-crow shrilling forth his crime, the fall
Of the Divine eyes, pleading mournfully,
And the wild tears that answered that dread call !
Doubtful he stood, one hand upon his key,
The gate still open, fain to bid begone,
Yet shamed to silence by the villein's plea.

Just then, the Kingly Brethren of Cologne,
The Three Wise Men, who erst to Bethlehem bore
Rich offering from the East to Mary's Son,
Passed with Saint Thomas toward the temple-stair,
Rehearsing each his part, for in the Play
At Heaven's high Christmas-feast all actors were.
The Porter-Saint, who saw them pass that way,
Beckoned Saint Thomas : " Bid this knave depart !
Unmannered clown, he heeds not aught I say !"
" What !" quoth Saint Thomas, " knows he what thou
art,

Yet dares defy thee ? Out, thou rascal, out !

And best were swiftest, ere thy bones shall
smart !”

Dudman quaked inly, but his words were stout :

“ Rascal I may be, yet no Infidel !

Sir Saint, I have heard that one of old durst doubt

Whether our Lord Himself could rise from Hell :
Made hard his stubborn heart, nor would believe
Till He whom he mistrusted did compel.

I never doubted ! Ne’er did I receive

Gospel as fable ! Save it be God’s will
The faithful of the faithless must crave leave
To win to Heaven, I, Dudman, bide here still !”

The good Saint reddened. Tingling once again

Through to the heart and marrow shot the thrill
Of bitter-sweet remorse and joyous pain,

As when of old he touched the wounded side
And knew the living Christ was Christ the slain.
But to the sturdy clown he nought replied.

“What can we do?” quoth Peter, sorely vexed,

“The gate will stand agape all Christmastide
If thus he sticks so closely to his text.

Fie! This gross ploughman-chattel of the farm
Plague us with stickling for his rights? What next?”

“Sir Saint,” quoth Dudman, “thou wast scarce so warm
When thou didst net fish down in Galilee!

If ploughman sort with fisherman, what harm?”
Even as he spoke, like brass rung suddenly

A third shrill voice set all his hair astart;
“A villein, and not budge? Draw forth the key
Peter, and let the base-born cow-herd smart!
'Tis like thee, Peter, thus to have let him pass;
With thee 'twas ever ‘Simpleness is Art.’”

“Paul, brother,” quoth the first, for Paul it was,
“Oust him thyself, for us he heedeth not!”
To which Saint Paul: “Ho, there, Sir Front-of-brass,
Sir Villein-in-gross, wilt truss thy prate and trot!
Out, ere I lay yon key athwart thy back,

And on thy clown's hide levy scot and lot !
Get forth, I say ! I am loath to touch thee ! Pack !”

“ Paul,” quoth the villein, “ for I know thy name,
Though all the twelve signs of the Zodiac

Have titles scarce so many as thou dost frame
Thus to miscall me, ’twere an easier thing

To clepe me Dudman. All unknown to fame,
’Tis true I am no godson of a king,

Nor child of a king's harlot. These my curls
Crisp not like his who weareth the Queen's ring.

I am no scion of the blood of Earls—
At least I trow not : none of all my kin

Within man's memory e'er took rank with churls,
Not even a saint among them. If 'tis sin

To be born villein, I confess the crime,
And to repent long since did I begin !

Yet, though I boast no pedigree sublime,
I ever loved God's nobles, and to hear

Of doughty deeds and champions of old time.

I know old tales of many a gallant peer

By beasts or men more bloody done to death
For that sweet Lord whose name they held so dear.

I know which Saint won Christ's first martyr-wreath,
When, as he told God's love, those murderous ones
Ran on him with stopped ears and gnashing teeth,
And all-to brake his holy head with stones :

Stephen, men called him. Him, too, well I know,
Who stood with dry white eyes and heard his groans—
Watched how the murderers smote him, blow on blow,
And held their garments—bade their hearts not faint
While limb could stir or drop of lifeblood flow !

Saul was his name. Why tremblest thou, Sir Saint ?

Thy name is Paul, not Saul ! Art thou the same ?
If Saul be Paul, then why not Saint be Paint,

The fair outside that cloaks the inward shame ?
The white upon the tomb that hides within

Mere carrion filth and things without a name ?
Thou Saint of Paint ! Saul, Paul ! Is Sin the Pin
That pricks thy conscience ? Wilt thou drive me forth,

While heaven finds harbour for thine own foul sin ?

Dost still make havoc here as erst on earth ?

I tell thee, Saint, I stir not till worse crime

Be proven upon me than my villein's birth !”

The Saint was silenced. He recalled, what time

He journeyed to Damascus, that dread blaze,

The stroke, the terror, and the voice sublime.

Once more the eclipse of those three nights and days

That sealed his eyelids, mocked their blind distress

With the new keenness of that inward gaze.

Once more alone in Edom's wilderness,

In trance apocalyptic, o'er his brain

The hope divine flashed on his grief's excess.

The three mused mutely. And, behold, a train

With opal-shimmering wings, like rack that speeds

Athwart the belted moon, sailed nigh amain.

As when at eve a flight of plummy seeds

Skims o'er a pool, light-wafted on the sigh
Of dying June that faints among the reeds
And frets no ripple on the mirrored sky—
Each feathery pilgrim now flies on before,
Now lingers while his brethren pass him by,
One tiny diamond on the liquid floor
Greeting with starry kiss the poisoning toe
On which he hovers ere he fleet once more—
So did afar that angel-escort show,
Each floating first a moment, and each last,
Swift change, yet order in the sheeny row.
And in the midst, Himself a light that cast
A shadow even from angel-glorioles,
Yet sweet as darkness to hot eyes, there passed
The Holy Shepherd, only Lord of souls,
Whose love knows nought of earthly small nor great,
But all He made still succours and controls.

And now they halted nigh the Heavenly Gate,
And the three shamefast Saints bowed reverently

To Him they knew the umpire of debate.

Before his Lord the villein bowed the knee
And whispered, trembling, his unlessoned prayer :

“Mercy !” he prayed : “Afar, dear Lord, from Thee
These Saints of Thine would fain forbid me share

In this Thy kingdom—would have driven me hence
Into yon outer darkness and despair,

But I withstood them. If mine insolence
Merit reproof, do Thou, O Lord, reprove,

And in Thy mercy visit mine offence.
Full well I know that none may win above

Save Thou hast judged him in Thy righteousness ;
Search me and try my heart, Thou God of Love,

And deal just sentence, or to curse or bless !
Thou knowst I have lived in sorrow from my birth,

A villein, outcast, friendless, comfortless :
A hewer of wood and tiller of the earth

With which twice o’er I have been bought and sold,
And paid my new lord fine upon my hearth.

I have toiled in summer’s heat and winter’s cold,

Yet aye the grey wolf loped within my door ;
And bairns and wife spake things that make men old
Or ere their prime to hear. Thou knowst how sore
The lot Thou dealtest—toil that ne'er had end,
Hunger and sickness and those bonds I bore.
Yet with Thy dealings did I ne'er contend :
I wrought my work and blest Thee, for I knew
That what was good, Thou in good time wouldst send.
I ever to thy Priests showed reverence due ;
And all they taught received for gospel pure :
Though much, not less impossible than true
Thou knowst was hard to accept with credence sure
For simple villein, whom to subtile creeds
No book-lore of the schools did e'er inure
Tis true, I cannot boast of godly deeds
Like Fulke, my lord's—nor gold nor fee were mine ;
Yet have I many a time denied my needs
To serve one needier. Oft did I assign
My ingle-stool to grandam Petronill,
And pinched to let Wat charcoal-burner dine.

None did I ever wrong by word or will—
Thou knowst, O Lord, I lie not. If Thou wilt,
Bid Father Roch tell all I e'er did ill,
And, though he shrove me, count up all my guilt !
I ask no better ! I will ne'er misdoubt
That even for me Thy precious blood was spilt !
Still to Thy promise yield I faith devout,
Which saith that him who cometh unto Thee,
Dear Jesus, Thou in no wise wilt cast out !”

He ceased, and Heaven was mute. With wordless plea
Imploring answer, crept he suppliant-wise
Anigh the Lord of Lords and clasped His knee,
And gazed unfaltering into God's dread eyes.
Then spake the Holiest : “ I have heard thy prayer
Long since, and willed thee to my Paradise,
Thou last of all my brethren ! Equal heir
With saints and martyrs, nor of less esteem
Than they which erst did crown and sceptre bear :
Enter, thou faithful servant, nor misdeem

Whate'er thine eyes have seen, thine ears have heard !

In Heaven as earth, things are not as they seem !”

Thus to the villein spake the Eternal Word,

And a new joy woke harmony supreme

Of angel-voices praising Christ the Lord !



A TALE OF A TRUMPETER.



A TALE OF A TRUMPETER.

'Twas as wild a flight in as wild a night

As ever you read or heard of :

Though I know well enough that the story's stuff

You won't believe a word of.

“To the Bridge !” cried the Chief; “was never such
need !

Yon Star is the Star of Warning !

To the Bridge ! We are lost if we make not speed

To cross the River ere morning !”

And we rose in the night, and raced and ran

Through the darkness under and o'er us :

Breathlessly following, every man,

As the Star streamed on before us.

And we came to the Bridge : “What haste ? what haste ?”

Quoth the Priest who stood as Warder :

“Let us pass,” said the Chief—“ere the night shall waste

We must cross to the further border !

“Have ye seen not the Star ? Look yon, far away,

How the five rays glisten and glimmer !

Let us pass ! We shall lose our guide if we stay ;

Even now the light grows dimmer !”

“Star, fellow ?—A Will-o’-the-Wisp !” quoth he,

“’Tis a fen-born fiendish comet !

Fast, fast have ye come, but faster should flee !

Flee, flee for the dear life from it !”

“Stand by !” said the Chief, “thou hast read not the
signs !

Who is he that made thee Warder ?

Wilt thou or nilt thou ere morning shines

We must pass to the further border !”

And we pressed to the front, for the crowd was strong,
And passed by the Priest together ;
When, lo, the three first, as we marched along,
Dropped suddenly—none knew whither !

“ Halt !” cried the Chief, and we heard a groan
And a splash that made us shiver ;
And we felt with our staves that the Bridge was gone
Which had spanned the Dismal River.

“ Back, back !” we cried, “ for the shattered arch
Is only a trap to snare us !”
“ To the bank !” said the Chief ; “ we must on with the
march,
Though we find no Bridge to bear us !”

And the Dismal River flowed broad and deep ;
No bridge—not a boat nor ferry !
There was only one of us did not weep,
And he was none too merry.

But he doffed his tabard and coat of mail,
Slung his horn to his shoulder duly ;
“ Ye will hear me no more if I chance to fail,”
He said, as he dived in coolly.

And there we kept pacing to and fro
On the banks of the Dismal River,
And nought could we see, but we heard its flow,
And the rustling sedges shiver.

The Knight's long lance, but a pace from the side,
Found no bottom of ooze nor gravel,
And we heard by the drop that the stream was as wide
As the Slinger's stone could travel.

Our Elder stood staring into the black :
“ He is drowned by this time, surely !”
“ 'Tis a Trumpeter less, if he comes not back,”
Answered the Priest demurely.

And there we kept pacing to and fro,

In a frenzy of mute surmising :

Quoth the Engineer in a whisper low :

“Is the tide in the river rising?”

“I would drown without fear, might I drown with him,”

Murmured the little Maiden :

Quoth the Priest, “unburdened he scarce can swim ;

’Tis kind to wish him laden !”

And the Knight leant mute on his lance, nor stirred,

And the Slinger ceased from slinging ;

When, lo, far away down stream we heard

A faint tantivy ringing !

“Thank God !” we echoed, and each man’s blood

Was aglow with a joyous tingle :

“Thank God,” said the Chief, “he hath crossed the
flood !

He is safe, but he stands there single !”

“Let us march!” said one, “down stream was the blast,

Down stream he will surely bide us.”

“List again,” said the Chief, “nor follow too fast,

We have none but him to guide us!”

And again we heard. ’Twas a louder strain,

Sounding higher up stream and higher :

“Tararà, tararà!” again and again,

Each blast ringing nigher and nigher.

And lo, as we watched by the darkling tide,

We were ware of a far-off gleaming,

A flare in the mirk on the farther side,

Like the torch of a runner streaming.

One light—three—four, with a glimmering red

Right over against us glancing :

And like dropping fire we saw as they sped,

Their flash in the dark wave dancing.

“Tararà, tararà ! See there, see there !”

Quoth the Knight, “how the torches quiver !
Have they found us a Bridge, or walk they on air ?
They are halfway over the River !”

“Tararà, tararà !” So nigh, so nigh ?

And nigher still to meet us ?

Dear God ! Was that our Trumpeter’s cry,

“Back, back to the Bridge to meet us ?”

“To the Bridge !” cried the Chief. “Poor fool,”
groaned the Priest,

“Will ye flee not yet from evil ?

Do ye know not the torches of Antichrist,
And the voice of the New Light Devil ?”

But we thronged to the Bridge like men distraught,

Not a word in answer spoken ;

And we saw by the light which the torch-men brought,
Where the arch of the Bridge was broken.

O never did torch shed a welcomer sheen
On the eyes of a panting lover,
Than that which showed us the gulf between,
But a scant three paces over.

“’Tis a single arch,” the Trumpeter cried :
“One shattered arch betrayed us !
We had crossed at first, had we had but a guide,
And a few stout planks to aid us !

“Parapet, buttress, and arch and pier
Beyond are as sound as ever !
Now show us thy skill, Sir Engineer,
For a roadway over the River !”

“To the Priest’s wooden house !” said the Chieftain.
“Speed !
And fetch us the walls for planking !”
“’Tis well,” quoth the Slinger, “a friend in need
’Twere a sin to pass unthanking !”

And we tugged and pushed at the pinewood wall,
For we knew 'twas death to tarry,
Till the roof crashed in with a shattering fall,
And we set to work to carry.

Oh, dim was the light of the Star that led,
Ere the weary work was ended ;
And over the planks in haste and dread
To the further shore we wended.

Swift, swift we sped o'er the echoing Bridge,
God wot, our need was sorest !
Swift, swift by moorland and mountain ridge,
Swift, swift by marsh and forest.

On, on, and on, full many a mile,
In the darkness under and o'er us,
And brighter and brighter the Star the while
Streamed ever amain before us.

On, on, till the dawn had rent with light
The night's broad folds of sable,
And we saw our guiding Star stand bright
O'er a lowly hostel-stable.

“He is there,” said the Chief; “the King of kings,
The child of the low-born stranger—
He is there, the Lord of all earthly things,
Lying swaddled within the manger.”

CHURCH AND STATE AT
THEBES.



CHURCH AND STATE AT THEBES.

“To Ramses, twice-crowned, for ever
Sole Lord from the Falls to the Seas,
From Ptahmes, Priest of the River,
With greeting of holiness these :—

“Behold, O King, I was praying
In the House of the River this night,
And the River spake to me, saying :
‘Take a reed in thy hand and write :

“‘Ye have watched by the pulse everlasting
Keeping time with the years in my flood :
Ye have seen how its waxing and wasting
Have builded this land of my blood :

“ ‘ Year on year ye have offered me greeting
Of prayer and victim and praise :
But the secret heart and its beating,
My heart—ye have known not its ways.

“ ‘ Now hearken and mark, for the measure
Of the times is full to the brim :
I will open the gates of my treasure
To the children of Misraim.

“ ‘ I will manifest that which is hidden,
My Name in my Holy Place :
My Kings and my Prophets unhidden
Shall speak with me face to face.

“ ‘ No more shall ye call me the River,
Which is but the vein of my wrist :
Henceforth ye shall know me The Giver,
The God of the King and the Priest !

“ ‘ Now therefore, send messengers running,
To the house of my servant, the King :
Bid him send for his craftsmen of cunning,
And see that they do this thing :

“ ‘ Bid him summon his carpenters hither,
And them of the stone-cutter’s trade,
The mortar and brick-men together,
And them of the trowel and spade :

“ ‘ Two and two, each man with his neighbour
He shall range them in order and rank,
For behold, I have need of their labour
To build me a wall and a bank.

“ ‘ A bank and a wall for my waters,
A bank from the Falls to the sea,
That ye and your sons and your daughters
May know there is none like Me !

“ ‘Forty cubits in height ye shall build it,
And twenty in breadth at the top :
For thus I the Giver have willed it,
To hallow mine uttermost drop.

“ ‘Your soil by its yearly ablution
My life-blood no more shall defile ;
No more shall both Egypts’ pollution
Be shame to the Godhead of Nile !

“ ‘I, the Giver, have hidden my sources,
My paths in the ways of the deep :
I charge ye, make holy my courses,
Lest I leave ye your cities a heap !’ ”

Just three years later, in winter,
At the last of the New Sun feasts,
Came out a decree to the minter
To coin the plate of the priests.

Therewithal, too, the King bade deliver

This letter to Ptahmes the Seer :

“ From the King to the Priest of the Giver,

Health, greeting, and grace through the year !

“ Three years have my people been toiling

To build at the Giver's behest,

And behold, it hath turned to their spoiling,

They are starving, the most and the least.

“ The Giver hath smitten with famine,

And there comes from the famine a cry :

‘ Where, O Giver, the plenty we swam in?

Give us bread ! Give us bread, for we die !’

“ Now therefore, make search, I beseech thee

What stirreth the wrath of the God ?

Entreat Him in prayer till He teach thee

How the land may be free from the rod.”

Came the messenger back on the morrow
From Ptahmes the Seer to the King :
“ O King, lo, a burden of sorrow,
A wondrous and terrible thing !

“ Behold, O King, I was praying
In the House of the Giver this night,
And the Giver spake to me, saying,
‘ Take a reed in thy hand and write :

“ ‘ Have ye sought me at last in your danger ?
Now at last would ye learn of My will ?
Behold, I am God, the Avenger !
Ye are mine, or to spare or to spill !

“ ‘ Ye have builded my bulwarks unheedful
Of Him in whose veins is the flood :
Ye have left undone that was needful :
I will have of ye blood for blood !

“ ‘Take ye one of your highest and chiefest
Of your nobles and men of note ;
To the King be he nearest and liefest,
Ye shall bury him up to the throat.

“ ‘Ye shall bury him thus by my waters
To the throat in the ooze of the clay,
And the King shall give charge to his daughters
To wait on him night and day.

“ ‘Night and day shall they feed him and tend him
And watch by my bulwarks of stone,
Till the kiss of my rising shall send him
To mingle his life with mine own.

“ ‘Now send to the King ; bid him hearken
And yield to the Giver’s command :
Or a vengeance thrice treble shall darken
The thresholds of want in the land !’ ”

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“ Call me Noph, Chief Scribe for the Armies,”
Said the King, “ to my presence with speed !
I have learnt what the root of the harm is,
Write swiftly, O Scribe, with thy reed !

“ ‘ From the King to Phraor, Commander
Of the Hosts of the Riverain, these :
No longer shall Misraim slander
My rule from the Falls to the seas.

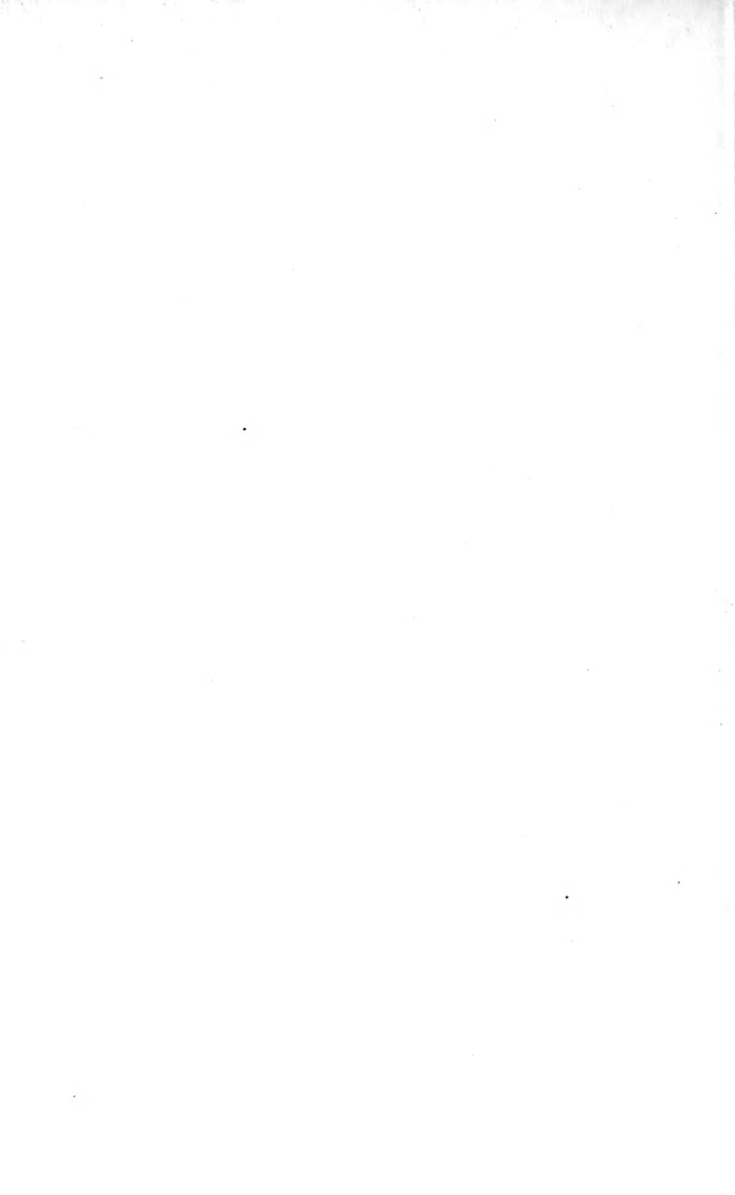
“ ‘ None is higher than Ptahmes nor chieffer
Of my nobles and men of note :
None nearer than Ptahmes nor liefer :
Go, bury him up to the throat !

“ ‘ Go, bury him straight by the River
To the throat in the ooze of the clay :
He himself hath declared that the Giver
Demandeth him thus for His prey !

“ ‘Take heed that he lives. Then go straightway
And see that these bulwarks be cut :
Make for every canton a gateway
As far as the waters are shut.

“ ‘My daughters shall wait on the Prophet
With breads dipped in oxymel :
For the Bank—let none go from off it
Till the breaches are open. Farewell !’ ”

Said Ramses the King, when the river
Brought harvest once more as it rose,
“ Let Misraim worship the Giver,
Made glad by the gifts He bestows”



THE KING CROWNLESS.



THE KING CROWNLESS.

WEARY of counsel and worn with fight,
The King to be sate alone with the night ;
For foes were many and friends were few,
And the friends were false, but the foes were true.
And one by one, Confederates three,
Came in the night to the King to be—
Came in the night from where they sit,
Warding the steps of the Bottomless Pit ;
And he heard as they came a Voice far down :
“ A monarch’s soul for a monarch’s crown !
For the one who crowneth the King to be,
Winneth for ever his soul in fee !”
Then he heard how Madness spoke to Sin :
“ Thou or I, sister, which shall win ?”

But a third beyond, with a stifled moan,
Muttered, "Tempt ye and fail ! He is mine
alone !"

One came with an eye that saw him not,
But peered right through at I know not what :
His cap was gay with a peacock's plume
That dangled down from a crumpled bloom
Of blood-red poppy and milk-white bells :
The Bishop, he said, of the Seven Hells,
And lord of the lordliest diocese
Of all in the great Pit Bottomless.
"I am Lord and Bishop," he cried, "of all
From the great world's brink to the seventh wall,
And I feed the flock in each several fold
With steel and brass and silver and gold,
With topaz and ruby and diamond ;
And I give to my chosen an empire's wand,
And an empire's crown that mocks the things
Which hoop the cracks of your crazy kings ;

For the realm they rule is as deep and high
As the Bottomless Pit and the roofless sky !
Lo here !” and the King saw how from a gem
That flashed like a star in his great key’s stem,
He plucked three rays, then another three,
And another yet, and athwart his knee
Bent them and twisted with might and main,
Twisted and plied and plied again,
Till they curled and writhed like the golden snakes
That leap in the sun on the rippling lakes ;
Plied and plaited, one up, three down,
Till he wove them all in a living crown
Of light and glory : “ It lacks but a gem,”
He said, “ to be meet for the diadem
Of the kingliest soul in my seventh fold : ”
And he bent him down to the grass, and rolled
The thing like a hoop in the starry dew,
And the drops as they touched it, fixed and grew
Into sapphire, emerald, chrysoprase,
The diamond’s frost and the ruby’s blaze,

Cunningly fashioned in stars and knops
Of glistening braids and dancing drops,
Till it shone like the trail of a meteor
Spangled with planet-dust o'er and o'er.
"This is my crown," he cried, and smiled,
"For the soul that comes like a little child !"

But the King said—"Yea, but a cypress wreath
Were a kinglier boon, were it bought with death !
I know thee of old ! 'Thou hast dogged me long
Through the crowds with thy whispered undersong :
Thou hast watched and waited, and watched in vain :
Thou may'st wait and watch as thou wilt again !"

"Seven folds, seven hells ! They are full enow !"
He said, with a careless lift of the brow :
"See here !" He pricked the crown with a straw,
And it shrivelled to nought ; but the sad King saw
How the stalk was charred at the touch, and knew
Though the crown were false, yet the flame was true.

“Feed him with steel,” he cried—“with steel !
He is mine when I call, from head to heel :
Aha ! I remember his soul’s eclipse,
When he knew me first by my scorpion-whips,
The Shepherd, who tended his flocks so well,
And gave them to drink of the streams of Hell !”

Then he turned and went, and the Second came,
With an eye so steeped in a ghastly flame,
That, fair of feature and lithe of limb,
That light of the Pit left her beauty dim.
Proudly she came, and the King was ’ware
Of a hemlock-bloom in her clustered hair,
And the hand that was hidden, he seemed to know,
Clutched something behind which she feared to show.

“What !” she said ; “art dazed by yon juggling fool ?
“Let the idiot pack to his own, and rule
Them that I send him, and their sons’ sons !
What is he to thee and the lordlier ones ?

Wouldst wear his crown? Who shall give thee the skill?
To wear it aright needs more than the will!
But I, I ask but thy will, and see
What a crownal of joy I store for thee!"

Then forth from behind her back she drew
A garland of roses dashed with dew:
Red as the cheek and the lip we love;
And into her tresses the bloom she wove
With one delicate hand, till her hair was alight
Like the waves with the sheen of ships by night,
And a passion of beauty, a trance of grace
Slid into her queenly limbs and face,
And the light in her eye but seemed to be
The soul of that lovelier mystery.

Then he said in a broken voice and strange:
"Whence come they, the roses? And whence the
change?
Show me! And show me thy other hand,
For thy garland grew in no earthly land!"

“My hand?” she cried, and she raised it up,
“’Tis a hand like thine, and it grasps but a cup!”
“Like mine?” he said, “Does the Queen of the Hells——”
But she lopped the words: “Tush! A cap and bells!
See here!” One drop from the cup’s red well
She dropped as she spoke, and caught as it fell
Like a falling star, on her finger-tips,
And fanned it awhile at her dewy lips,
Till it swelled and blossomed and bloomed in her breath,
A sister rose to the blushing wreath.
“Bind it,” she said, “in thine own wild hair!
’Tis a bloom, I ween, for a king to wear!”—
“Is it blood?” he asked. “Our mate was fain,
’Tis clear, to test his art on thy brain,”
She said, with a sneer: “Is the red, red gold
No better than blood? Look again!” She rolled
A little rill from the cup’s red brink,
And it splashed on the stones with a clash and a chink
Into coin and cross and buckle and star
In a glistening frost of golden spar.

“Is it blood?” and she gathered her treasure up,
And laughed. But he said, “There is blood in the cup!”
“If the blood be the life,” she said, “’tis blood !
’Tis life to the dying—a lean world’s food !—
Is it only a falsehood, the gold and state ?
Is it sweet to be rich ? Is it sweet to be great ?
Is it sweet with kings to be hand in glove ?
Is it sweet to rule ? Is it sweet to love ?
Is it sweet to be loved ? Ay me, how sweet !
Yet these are my gifts ! Do thy pulses beat
Only with milk, that the red blood-wine
Womans thee thus ? It is like to thine !”—
“Like mine?” he said, “Does the Queen of the Hells——”
But she broke in again : “Tush ! A cap and bells !—
Am I Queen of the Hells if the dead men sleep ?
In a world so shallow what room for the deep ?
The deepest is but the centre, and thence
But a span to the blue circumference !
I am Queen, ’tis true, from thence to the sky :
But if Hell, ’tis the Priest that makes it, not I !—

Give me thy will ! Does it seem such a boon,
Just the feeble stir 'twixt the earth and moon ?
This nothing ? Am I not fair enow ?
Wilt thou walk the world with a crownless brow ?”

As she spoke, what a full warm womanhood
In the heart of her loveliness throbbed and glowed !
What witchery flashed from her every limb !
What love from her eyes ! His own waxed dim
As he said : “ Even so : But a cypress-wreath
Were a kinglier boon, were it bought with death !
I have known thee of old ! Thou hast haunted me
long

In the night with thy whispered undersong !
Thou hast watched and waited, nor all in vain !
Thou mayst wait and watch as thou wilt again !”
“ Not all in vain in the days of old,”
She echoed, “ when thou in thy love wouldst fold
Even these poor limbs to thy trembling breast,
And dream that thou wert not all unblest !

Dost thou, indeed, remember the day,
And the eyes that were bright in thy youth's sweet
May?

The day when Belial blessed us both
At the bridal of Mammon and Ashtaroth?"
And he said: "Too well! and the moods that plough
The furrows of eld in the boy's smooth brow!
See here!"—But she turned in her wrath to tear
The roses that dawned in her midnight hair,
Till they oozed from her clenched red hand as she
stood,

And dripped on the grass and stones in blood!
"Seven pits," she cried, "for the living dead!
For the living may die while the blood runs red!
And the dead can eat and drink and sleep,
For the world is shallow, but Death is deep!
Does he dream that he lives?" As she turned to go,
He saw in her eye the ghastly glow,
And the glory had died on cheek and tress,
And her beauty's self was a loathliness!

Then the Third one came in an abbess' weed,
With an eye of rule, and a strong will's speed.
"Wear this!" she croaked, "for thy choice is gone!
They have tempted and failed—thou art mine alone!
Come forth!"—As she spoke, from the wayside dust
She lifted a crown of thorns, and thrust
With her wrinkled hand on his naked brow,
Tearing the flesh like a burning plough.
"Peace!" she cried: "He who walks with me
Must be still as death and eternity!
Is the blood in thine eyes?" One drop as it fell
She caught on her finger: "The Dame of Hell
Is, to give her her due, no monopolist!
Look here! Mayst fashion a rose an thou list
As deftly as she!" and he saw how there grew
A rose in her fingers dashed with dew,
A sister rose to the blushing crown.
"Not yet!" she cried, as she dashed it down,
"They are thine at will as thou wendest home,
'To wear or waste in the years to come!"

Then he walked beside her silently
Down a rocky stair without flower or tree,
In the side of a cliff, with a gulf below
On the left, where a great sea seemed to flow,
Though nothing he saw save a depth of sky,
The same below, and the same on high :
And he groaned, " O God, but the cypress-wreath
Were a kinglier boon were it bought with death !
I know thee of old ! Thou hast chased me long
Through the world with thy dismal undersong !
Let me die !" But he felt a clutch on his arm :
" Peace, craven, peace, ere thou come to harm !
Look back !" He turned, and saw from afar
How the steps were ablaze with buckle and star
And coin and cross where the blood had flowed
From his streaming brow on the stony road.—
" Peace ! peace ! March on ! Thou shalt find the track
Even by these that shall guide thee back !" —
He was still, but he thought : " O, the cypress-wreath
Were a kindlier boon were it bought with death !"

Down, down they toiled, till a feeble light
Flashed out of a cavernous depth on the right,
And they strode right in, where a taper shone
At the head of a bier in the gloom, alone :—
A taper, a bier, and a winding-sheet,
That waited, it seemed, for the bearers' feet.—
And she said : "Come hither !" Too well he
knew

The dead one there, or ever she drew
The cloth from the cold white face, and cried :
"Is she fair—too fair for a dead man's bride ?"
But he heard no more, for his brain spun round
In a deathsick close of all sight and sound,
And his heart ere it stopped gave a stifling beat
As he fell into a swoon at the mocker's feet !

Then the life came back through a blinding dew
Of deadly tears, and he saw or knew
As he lay foredone from his soul's eclipse,
How she caught a tear on her finger-tips

And it froze at the touch into starry stone
Rayed like the head of the Holy One.—
And she gathered three rays, then another three,
And another yet, and athwart her knee
Bent them and twisted with might and main,
Twisted and plied and plied again,—
Till they curled and writhed like the golden snakes
That leap in the sun on the great ship's wakes ;
Plied and plaited, one up, three down,
Till she wove them all in a living crown
Of light and glory. “It lacks but a gem,”
She said, “to be meet for the diadem
Of the kingliest soul in my seventh sphere.”
And she bent her carelessly over the bier,
And touched with the hoop the brow of the dead,
Till the gathered death-dews glistened and spread
On the gleaming plait, and the whole was ablaze
With diamond, ruby and chrysoprase,
And it shone like the trail of a meteor
Spangled with star-seed o'er and o'er.—

“Our mate is no wizard,” she cried, “for, see,
Thou canst fashion a crown as deftly as he !
Not yet ! not yet !” And she dashed it down :
“Thou must give me thy Hope ere thou wear the
crown !

Thou must give me thy Hope ! Is the boon so great ?
Is it bliss so sweet to whimper and wait,
Like a child for the moon, for the fairer chance,
The dupe and the vassal of circumstance ?
Give it ! Who gives me Hope, gives Fear !
He is free for ever ! The cross and bier,
The torture and waste of soul and limb,
And the great world’s wrong,—they are solved for him !
He is free of the Hells, of Earth, of Air,
Who hath builded his bliss on a wise despair !”

“Take it !” he groaned : “My Hope ! it lies
Dead as the light in yon dear eyes !
Yet take it ! I care not ! What to me
Is living or dead, or bond or free ?

Take it !"—Ah, God ! what a holy smile
Lit the lip that had smiled but to mock erewhile,
As she lifted the thorns from his clotted brow !

“Go forth ! Even I am thy bondslave now !
Go forth ! Thou art lord of wont and use,
With might among men to bind and loose !
Wear thou no crown, yet be thou a king,
And the world is thine, and all worldly thing !
Go forth !”—He turned, but his guide was gone,
And he stood in the cavernous gloom alone.

MICHEL ANGELO

OF HIS MADONNA

IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



MICHEL ANGELO

OF HIS MADONNA.

IN the dawn not of earth ever looming
On the verge of the land untrod,
All alone in the infinite gloaming,
Sat Mary the Mother of God.

There I saw Her, the Star of the Ages,
And alone as She sat I could see
The Book of the Prophet whose pages
Were open upon Her knee.

She read therein, but the saying
Was dark as the noon's eclipse :
And I heard the voice of Her praying
Going Godward up from Her lips

“ O God, that my prayer might win me
A gracious word in my need !
For my spirit is sad within me,
And Thy Prophets are hard to read.

“ Lord, how shall Thy handmaid gather
The wisdom Thy seers declare ?
The burden is heavy, O Father !
It is more than my soul can bear !”

And a Voice was heard there singing,
And a sound as of wheels that roll ;
A sound as of creatures winging,
And behold, a Hand with a scroll:

Like the scroll wherein was written
Lamentations and mourning and woe,
Which the great Voice bade be eaten,
When the Seer saw God in the bow.

And lo, it was spread before Her,
And She read there the doom of blood !
Of those who were hovering o'er Her,
Four folded their wings and stood.

And She cried : " O Lord, for the blossom
That hath bloomed on Jesse's rod !
The sword that hath pierced my bosom,
Must it pierce His side, my God ?

" O, look down on Thine own hand-maiden !
I prayed for a word in my need,
And behold, I am doubly laden !
O Lord, are there two must bleed ?

" No hope ? No shadow of turning ?
O, Father, thy will be done !"
But Her head was bowed with yearning,
And She groaned—" O God ! My Son !"

Yet even as of old to the Prophet
 When he ate of that scathing scroll ;
Though bitter as reek of Tophet,
 'Twas as honey sweet to his soul.

So to Her, but sweeter, O sweeter,
 As the words more bitter to eat !
A bitter beyond all bitter,
 And a sweet beyond all sweet.

The children came from their playing,
 Her own boy Jesus and John :
Ah, what should they know of Her praying ?
 Of the secret that made Her wan ?

The Child touched the Book of the Prophet
 That lay on His Mother's knee :
But He swept unheeded from off it
 That scroll of the dread to-be ;

And one of the Four stooped lowly,
Took the scroll as it lay at Her feet,
Reading through in a whisper slowly
The burden, so bitter, so sweet.

At his side, on his shoulder leaning,
A second had bowed his head,
As he followed the terrible meaning
On the scroll that his wing-mate read ;

Read, whispering low to his brother ;
But the little One took no heed :—
“ O, give me the Book, sweet Mother,”
He cried ; “ that I, too, may read ! ”

Ah, how earnest He waxed in His pleading,
As She held the Book from His hand !
“ Mo ther mine, with Thy help in my reading,
Indeed, I shall understand ! ”

The fingers still clasped on the pages,
How faintly He clung to the Book !
Ah me for Thee, Star of the Ages !
Thou, whose love forbade Him to look !

What tenderness more than maternal !
What passion divine of regret !
What yearning, what sorrow supernal !
“Not yet, O my Blessed ! Not yet !”

But that other, His playfellow, listened
To the Angels' whisper the while :
What amaze in his wide eye glistened,
And parted his lips with a smile !

For he heard, though an Angel's sighing
Made fainter the whispered word,
Of a Voice in the wilderness crying—
“Prepare ye the way of the Lord !”

As he stood there, all ear, inly guessing,
“I, John, am that Herald, perchance !”

Two fingers half raised as in blessing,
Half dreamily closed as in trance.

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Thus I saw them, I, Michel, those seven,
In the Gardens one morning in May :
They were neither on earth nor in heaven,
Yet I saw them clear as the day.

And I drew. Ghirlandaio half-lauded
My studies, and bade me work on.
Torregiano the Jealous applauded
By filching my sketch for the John.

Till at last I set hand to my painting
After mass on Saint Michaelmas day ;
I wrought with a fervour unfainting
Till March in the Gardens was gay.

Then I lost my Lorenzo—Ah, never
Could I paint from that Vision agen !
I left it unfinished for ever,
For how should I finish it, then ?

Unfinished the work, yet I wot, he
Who searches may find if he will,
In mine own Casa Buonaroti
How the Vision abode with me still.

On the wall there in fresco far other
The work and the symbol I wrought.
I, the Seer, I had changed ; but the Mother,
The same, save the mood of the thought.

The same, too, my chisel discovered
In the Florentine marble—the same :
The same ever o'er me She hovered
When I mused, when I cried on Her name !

In the brow, crowned with blessing, still human :
In the breast, pierced through by the sword :
Mother-Maiden ! The Hope of the Woman !
The Woman through whom was the Word !

BY THE UNDERCLIFF.

BY THE UNDERCLIFF.

Now white in the sun 'twixt down and deep
The gulls were idly sailing,
Now lost in the grey with a seaward sweep
I still could hear them wailing.

My soul was faint and my limbs were stiff,
And the world and I were weary,
As I climbed to the seat by the Undercliff
'Mid the rose-leaves falling dreary.

'Twas a seat in the wall, where, huge at the back
Lay a single Titan boulder,
And a line athwart it was polished and black
With many a pilgrim's shoulder.

And I stood to read on the written stone,
Where the crown of his head was hoary,
How a thousand pencils and blades had strown
Their runes of a hinted story.

And I grasped my hammer and hewed a name
In a passion of sad endeavour :
I graved it deep in a furrowed frame,
To endure with the rock for ever.

And I said : " Grey stone, nor moulder nor move,
But make my secret eternal :
The Hope is the life of earthly love,
But the death of the love supernal !

" Bear record, to be is more than to do,
And suffering better than daring :
Through a manly sorrow comes strength that is true,
True joy through a wise despairing.

“Lo, this is my sign,” I said, “Grey rock,
That I give thee thus in keeping :—
Be thy record safe from the earthquake’s shock,
And the treacherous landslip’s creeping.

“Yea, cherish my sign and keep it whole
In the teeth of wind and weather,
While woods shall rustle and waves shall roll,
And the round world hold together.

“And aye may the nightingale build her nest
In the shade of thy hawthorn hollow,
And the suns of March make warm thy crest
For the foot of the foremost swallow.

“And hither for aye may the butterfly come
With wings of the harebell’s azure ;
And the humble-bee swing from his thistle to hum
Round thy fringe of moss at leisure.

“ And day and night may the seasons flee
With a gracious fondness o’er thee !
And the brook and the wood, the hills and the sea,
Sing psalms of joy before thee !

“ And a welcome refuge for weary feet
And a tryst for love’s confessing,
May all who rest in thy wayside seat
Remember thee aye with blessing !”

* * * *

And I said, as I climbed the Undercliff
In the mist of a chill November,
“ I will visit my stone, though my limbs be stiff,
To tell him I still remember.

“ ’Tis a score of years and more ago
Since I carved that legend newly,
But I carved it deep in the solid stone,
And he will have kept it truly.”

And the cliff was hoarse with the cawing daws
And the writhen boughs were clashing,
And the sea-birds screamed in the shuddering pause
Of the surge on the shingles gnashing.

And I said : "When I climbed the path erewhile
'Twas the last of the days of roses :
But ruddily still the holly can smile
For the coming Christmas posies !"

And I came to the stead where the stone had been,
But the seat that I knew had vanished :
And the wall was modern and straight and clean,
And the stone that I loved was banished.

And I sought and sought for my friend in vain :
He lurked not in bush nor bramble :
And hillside and hollow again and again
Made mock of my fruitless scramble.

Till, shoreward gazing, beneath in the bay
I fancied I still could single
His clay-stained base from the rocks that lay
Worn white in the grinding shingle.

But I said : " Let him rest ! I will search no more,
'Twere only a grief to find him !
Let him moulder in peace on the wasting shore,
With the sign wherewith I signed him !

" But a little longer, and I, as he,
Shall be lost to them that love me ;
And lie with my secrets down by the sea,
With the shade of the hills above me.

" O happy, if haply one or two,
My secret of secrets sharing,
Shall have learnt that to be is more than to do,
And suffering better than daring."

ARTHUR'S KNIGHTING.

ARTHUR'S KNIGHTING.

I MIND me of Toraise in Carmelide :—

Plenary court with show and festival
Held King Leodegan that Whitsuntide.

By noon the busy cooks had served in hall
Pottage of herbs with spiceries and wine,

Boars' heads in aigredouce and therewithal
Herons and egrets in sauce Gamelyne,

Peacocks in pride in platters of pure gold,
And swans in silver served with galentine,

Bakemeats and venison and a store untold
Of savoury breads, and flesh, and fowl, and fish,

Sallets and mortrews, fritters hot and cold,

Creams, cates, and jellies, many a lordly dish
Of pear and pippin, comfit-carraways,
Citron and dates—a Cardinal could wish
No fairer garnish on his holy days.
And after every course the Sewer arrayed
A subtle fancy of Dame Fortune's ways :
First, Belisaire upon his throne displayed ;
Next, the blind lazar cowering by the wall ;
The third, in tattered weed, a beggar-maid ;
And last, Cophetua's bride in crown and pall.
Dame Fortune's self the while, in midmost place,
Poising her gilded limbs on her swift ball
Above the mast-head, with a silken lace
Bare up the mainsail of an argosy
Of beaten silver, that in hypocras
Swam idly, all becalmed in a Red Sea,
Among the isles of wafer-cake in sop.

And fair aloft, the minstrel-gallery
A ceilure starred with gold did overtop :

And ever among, the quire or played or sang
With citole, sackbut, sawtrey, and sweet stop
Of clariner and cornet, and the clang
Of timbrels and of tabors—pipe and lute
With their wild warble thrilling through the twang
Of harps and wail of melancholy flute.
To that high music every heart beat high
With knightly passion, and when all was mute,
The young men did not think it much to die ;
And greybeards knew that their old blood was
young,
And looked upon the young men with a sigh.
Then forward stood a chorister and flung
Such sweet, sweet sorrow into his sweet lay
Of lovers' woe, that, ere the song was sung,
There was no warrior's eye but turned away
Lest it should meet his fellow's for the tear.

Ginevra looked at Arthur, but the grey
Of her bright eyne knew nought of lover's fear ;

And when they met not his, the rebel blood
Flushed to the fair tip of her tingling ear,
As there before him teeth on lip she stood,
For that she knew she showed so beautiful
In the wild triumph of that sovran mood,
And grudged that he should see not. Was he dull,
And drank that philtre of sweet sound in vain,
That thus he looked away, nor cared to lull
The divine longing of love's hunger-pain
By feeding in her eyes his love with love?
He saw not,—no ! Nor, though he stared amain,
Saw he the banners blazoned bright above
The starry ceilure. Not until the stir
After the song, when all the guests 'gan move,
Did her true lover think to look at her.

And then, pardie, her eyes were elsewhere :

For lo, past truncheoned steward and cellarer
Who stood beside the cupboard, mazed with care
Of the great goblets and the cups of state,

Limped Tronc the jester, with a Kaiser's air,
His kingly train upborne by an ape sedate,
And four white poodles, two on either side,
Marching upright, but sad, as if the fate
Of courtier-life bore hardly on their pride,
And those gay silken masquer weeds they wore
Repaid not half what they must needs abide
As hangers-on to majesty so poor.
Long laughter shook the hall at that strange show,
Which waxed amain when on the lower floor
The motley knave, with many a mop and mow,
Bade all his four-foot courtiers dance and leap,
Just as a king might bid his dukes do so.
The feasters laughed and drank, and they drank
deep
Of those tall flagons, and the butler's wand
Waved for fresh vintage with a lordly sweep.
Ginevra raught a wine-flask from the stand
Brimmed with the ripest, and at Arthur's knee

Knelt, a deep beaker in her dainty hand,
 Gemmed all within with jewels that make flee
All taint and venom from the faery brim,
 And humbly proffered her new lord. But he,
Shamed that such service should be done to him
 By her who was his worship, bade her rise.
“Nay,” quoth the Sire, “fair knight, in life and limb
 We are all thine—Let be, the girl is wise.”
Then Arthur drank and gave her back the cup ;
 But still she knelt beside him, and her eyes
Betrayed no signal as she raised them up
 Of woman’s art in the child’s artlessness,
As if she wondered how her lord should sup.

Yet inly knew she all her loveliness :
The pilch of velvet, parted white and blue,
 Reversed with ermines for an empress,
All overt on the sides, where shimmered through
 The kirtle’s silken warp with weft of gold
From looms of Baldack—O, full well she knew

The needled broidery wrought on every fold—
Those smiling suns above and sunflowers three
Under each sun, with faces broad and bold
Staring upon him through their greenery
Of sheeny leafage ; all along the hem
A riens plus bas jeo ne me tourne mie
Figured in umber, and on every stem
Solleil m'attire on scroll of argent grain—
The glistening girdle brooched with pearl and gem,
The gipciere silver-guarded and its chain,
The coronal of gold and golden net—
Full well she knew she wore them not in vain,
But knew no less herself was mightier yet.
The joyous witchcraft of her sunny hair,
The spell of eyes that dimmed the eyes they met,
Even the sigh that half betrayed how fair
The rosy promise of the imperial breast,
Guising an art to tell how, pillowed there,
Her love, the sovran of the world, might rest
In empire sweeter than the sway of kings.

So, for the night was waxing, host and guest
Betook them to their chambers, and the things
Which showed so mighty faded while they slept
Utterly even as fond imaginings,
And no man knew that he had laughed or wept.
But not forgetful of sweet life they lay,
For each, almost ere midnight tolled, had leapt
Forth from his couch to busk him for the day.

Then on the dais a carpet of fine Tars
Was spread in hall, where grooms and pages gay,
With tapers twinkling under the gold stars,
Lighted the bare-armed, leathern-aproned band
Who cased us in our harness for the wars.
And 'mid the clang, a squire on either hand,
Came Arthur's self, and on the carpet doffed
His mantle blue of cloth of Samarcand,
Unhasped the jewelled girdle, and aloft
Lifted the velvet coat, and set aside
The banded shoon of cheveril white and soft.

Then stately through high hall in seemly pride,
Among the clashing press, that Peerless One
Stepped with such gait as might beseem the bride
Of empire peerless underneath the sun.
Yet to her lord right maidenly she spake,
Bidding good morrow: "Nay," quoth she, "by none
Save mine own hands, sweet Sire, for knighthood's sake
Shalt thou be armed this day."—With that she set
Upon the kingly cycladoun of lake
The hacketon all lined with sarcinet,
Orfreyed without with crescents of thin gold
Upon the buckskin ; next the solleret
She fitted on each foot with fold on fold
Of overlapping steel and toe-piece keen,
Like scale and sting of hornet ; next in hold
She locked his thews in greaves of damasked sheen
Of Milan ; next the cuisses featously
She hasped upon his thigh, and fair between
Buckled the knee-piece underneath the knee ;
Vambrace and brassart next, and elbow-plate

As squire who knew full well where each should be
Upon his arms she jointed in due state,
And shelled the shoulders in their silver scale.

Then, o'er the pourpoint, heeding not the weight,
Deftly she donned the jesseraunt of mail ;

And over that, the jupon, blazoned fair
With fiery dragon swindging his huge tail,
And broidered bordure, wrought in leafage rare
Of braided strands of silk incarnadine.

Then on the golden glory of his hair
With gentle stedfast hand and earnest eyne,

As if she offered up a kingly gift
With solemn pageant at a saintly shrine,

With arms upstretched before him did she lift
The bascinet all burnished, rich inlaid

With golden damask, then with fingers swift
Made fast the fringe of camail fair displayed ;

Drew on the gauntlets with their gadlings gilt
And tasseled hems with knotted silk arrayed ;

And kneeling then, the spurs he won in tilt

On the first day he armed him, on his heel

She set and buckled. Deftly thus she built
Around her love that sheeny tower of steel.—

But more was wanting. Still upon one knee
Beside her new lord did the proud one kneel,
And from the blushing page took reverently
The faery wonder of Escalibor

With all its wealth of jewelled wizardry
Wherewith to gird her knightly bachelor :

Baldrick and hilt and scabbard—not a gem
But flashed with virtue for a conqueror :—

This ruby once on Judith's diadem
Blazed like a star—that diamond clasp of yore
Girdled the Wise King in Jerusalem :

Yet all not worthier than the blade they bore,

Forged in the caverns of the Enchanted Lake
By Weland, snapped and forged again thrice o'er,
Graven with names whereat the foul fiends quake
In potent rune and mystic sign enscrolled ;

Then for the first time did the fair hand shake,

Yet tongued the buckle smoothly on the fold
And the rich ends in a loose knot let fall.

So rose she, proudly smiling to behold
Her knight and king, how comely and how tall
He showed in that fair labour of her hand.
Yea, and beside her others smiled in hall ;
For watching the sweet pair anigh did stand
Her sire and Merlin, with such thoughts as stir
Old hearts at sight of young love, 'mid a band
Of gaping losels, page and armourer.

Then spake old Merlin with his sour-sweet smile,
By name to Arthur, but as much to her :—
“ Fair sir, in Logress, in the minster-aisle
Of sweet Saint Stephen erst thou didst receive
At pious Dubric's hand the name and style
Of a true knight, but now thou wouldst achieve
A dearer honour—now almost 'tis thine
To be love-knighted. By this lady's leave

One thing alone is lacking."—Her full eyne

Ginevra flashed upon that wizard grey,

As Arthur asked : " What lacketh, master mine ?

No rite shall fail my chivalry this day

From whence I date my knighthood, for till this

I have but jested." Then quoth Merlin : " Nay,

'Tis but a trifle—let the lady kiss,

And thou, fair sir, art knight for evermore ! "

" Sweet Sire," quoth she, " King Arthur shall not miss

For gift so small his knighthood. If my lore

Be nothing in this matter, pardon me :

Yet as to kisses, I am not so poor

That I can spare none." Then full maidenly

Her rosy lips she lifted to her lord

And kissed him in all stateliness ; but he

Caught her in both arms and without a word

Repaid the kiss thrice o'er and thrice to boot.

O, but no rune nor gem on belt nor sword

Could stay the trembling that from head to foot

Shook the new knight in that encounter sweet,

No harness ward the wound from his heart's root.

So kissed those lovers. Fleet and few, how fleet,
How few, from the first cradle to the last,

Those high eternal moments ! O, the beat
Within their pulses made our own beat fast

And dimmed our eyes with pity and regret.
Or do we now grow old, and fondly cast

A sadness on the joy we half forget,
Clouding with sorrows of our eld the youth

We do remember to remember yet ?
We know not now. But even thus in sooth

Those lovers kissed, and we who saw them kiss
Look back and see them still with such deep ruth

As maketh old men weep at sight of bliss ;—
Still feel the whisper which we could not hear :

“ All eyes are staring—loose me after this.”
So slipped she from his arms with gracious cheer,

Ruddy for maiden shame, yet not the less
Proud, not alone of her own knight sans peer,

But proud that all should see that fond caress.

Then Arthur turned as one but half awake,
Drunken with that deep draught of loveliness,
Dazed with his dreams of conquest for her sake
And bliss to be. But when his eye did light
On her sad-smiling sire, a flush 'gan break
Into his brow, with love's own wanness white ;
And when beyond he felt the glittering blue
Of Merlin's eye, he crimsoned through outright ;
For well that bridegroom knew that Merlin knew
His lawless other love and its wild sin—
Sin unto death, even though all else be true.

But Merlin spake : “ Hereafter thou shalt win
Glory undying, such as never yet
Was e'er achieved by prince or paladin.
Yea, there be mighty names that men forget,
And all our life is but a little space,
And soon we shall lie still for all our fret.
Our day is short, and night comes on apace,
And then we shall not know sorrow nor bliss,

Nor toil nor rest, nor recollect the face
Of man nor woman. Yet by that sweet kiss
To the world's end men shall remember thee !
They shall remember, yea, and more than this :
King thou art now, and king again shalt be
Hereafter in this land of Bloy Bretayne ;
For though thou go away, and shalt be free
No less than others from the toil and pain,
Thou shalt not die as others, nor the years
Shall waste no glory of thy secret reign
In realm of Faery, whence among thy peers
Thou shalt return to rule in sight of all
That shall have eyes to see thee through their tears.
Of joy that after so long interval
Their own King Arthur doth come back to men."

So Merlin spake, and we, who stood in hall,
Were mute for musing. But Ginevra then
As one whom joy and doubt at once o'erwhelm,
Hearing how he, her lord, should come agen,

Yet nought of her, the lady of his realm—

Stepped forth once more and with firm hand
did don

Over the knight's steel cap the kingly helm,

Windowed and pranked with gold, and thereupon
A chaplet wrought with leaf of lily and vine,
Beaten in gold—a Jew's-work pentagon
Under each foil, inwrought with subtle twine
Of stones of empire on the sheeny rim.

Then Merlin came, saying : “ The last is mine,”

And set above the helm a crest to dim
All gold and gemwork flash they as they might ;
The Dragon-royal, through whose every limb
The lifeblood beat in pulses of quick light ;
Yet stirred it not, save that its snaky tail
It curled in glancing folds, and fiery bright
It breathed a flame, red-mirrored in the mail.

So strode the King full kingly to the gate,

Where in gay trappings o'er the burnished scale

Bridged by the saddle, his tall steed did wait

And neighed to greet his monarch as he strode
And swung into the stirrups in all state.

Sadly those lovers each bade each to God ;
For glory is sweet but love is loth to go ;

And through the strait lane clattering forth we rode
With folded gonfanons and lances low.

THE EVE OF MORTE ARTHUR.



THE EVE OF MORTE ARTHUR.

BESIDE the dripping copses fleeting low,
The homeless cuckoo jeereth all the day,
Even as he jeered a thousand years ago.
May-morn itself is weary of the May.
In wonted wise, the cheerless nightingale
Carpeth her carol on the hawthorn spray :
The daffodil and primrose are as pale,
Dog-violet scentless as in Mays of yore,
And all the woodland telleth its old tale.

All deeds are done, and the last quest is o'er ;
For Galahad is gone, and sinless Knight
Shall seat him in Siege Perilous no more.
O pure and perfect Champion of the Right,

O lily-flower of sinful Lancelot's line !
Wert thou not born to teach us how the might
Of earthly knighthood quails before divine ?
True warrior, harnessed in celestial mail !
Wert thou not Priest, too, chosen at the shrine,
When the last glory of the Holy Grail
Flashed from the altar-stone in Carbonek,
And psalms of welcome pealed within the veil ?
Not like thine erring sire hast thou made wreck
Of God's dear grace, and flinched the one last
quest ;
In death as life, a soul without a fleck !

Yea, Galahad hath entered into rest,
Fair-tombed in Sarras, his own holy land !
That knightly Hermit, too, whom he loved best,
Percivall, sleeps in peace at his right hand ;
And at his left, that knight's sweet sister, oared
By angel-shipmates to the blissful strand.

Tristan, than whom since Nembroth 'fore the Lord

No mightier hunter rode with horn and hound ;

He, too, hath died the death, not hand on sword

As best beseems true knight of Table Round,

But slain by her he wronged : " Fair dame," quoth he,

" Look forth, for I am faint of my sore wound :

Be the sails white, my Love comes back to me,

Be the sails black, all my good days are done."

Then went the wife and looked across the sea,

And saw the white sails glisten in the sun,

And lied to him she loved : " One sail I spied,

Blacker than treason,—other spied I none."

But he thereon gave a great groan and died.

Then came that other widow to the beach,

And those two women meeting there dry-eyed

Across the dead stood staring each on each.

Then, bending low, that queenly Voyager

Kissed the white lips : " Mine own !"—and in the speech

Fell forward dead. The first one glared at her

And spurned her with her foot and slunk away.

So passed he to the land where none can err ;
The Sire of Nurture. Let the gaunt wolf bay,
And the tall-antlered red-deer couch secure,
The broad-winged heron fearless cleave the grey ;
No bowman lives can draw a bolt so sure ;
Dumb are his deep-mouthed boar-hounds of Albayne,
His falcons-royal heedless of the lure !

And he, too, Merlin, he who wooed in vain
The grace of that fair Lady of the Lake
Who nursed Sir Lancelot—cometh not again !
Snared in the charm he taught her for love's sake,
The hoary Wizard haunts the thorny brere,
And wastes his marvels on the wild-wood brake.
Yet still not seldom may the Hermit hear
A dolorous hint at dusk in the Waste Land ;
And caitiff horseman, felled by angry spear
Five fathom o'er the croup with unseen hand,
Surmise a dreary chuckle in the breeze .
Among the bare oaks of Brokeliand.

All are forgotten. Yea, and more than these,
Fair dame and lord, minstrel and knight and sage,
Who wrought and fought and loved and took their ease,
Have wended forth on their last pilgrimage.

In shameless drivell of unhallowed eld
Morgana doteth on a lusty page
Among the lakes o' the West, where once she held
High court that vied with Arthur's court of yore :
And, homeless wandering through her woods unspelled,
The Fair Dame of the Forest Sans-retour
Hath lost her chess-play and sweet carollings,
Her greenwood bowers of dalliance all forlore.

O, for those old May-days, when queens and kings
Held court of Love amidst the Table Round,
And she whose knight had done the worthiest things
For her sole sake, though she and Fortune frowned,
Heard all the doughty deeds he did achieve
And gave the guerdon as he sate there crowned !

O days of glory ! O that Easter Eve
In Table Round when Arthur sate in hall,
And all the kings from whom he did receive
Homage and fee were vested with the pall
And crown and sceptre, vassals of his throne ;
While lordly heralds told with trumpet call
The whole fair folk of fifteen realms his own !
Aye, and the knights that won them, with loud voice
Those heralds blazoned, and their full renown,
Even to the steeds that bare them, and the choice
Of shield and token and enchanted brand,
Galuth and Morglay, Florent, Marmyadoise,
And the keen glory of the Arthurian hand !
And when the heralds ceased, the Minstrel's chant
Bound up the flowers of fame from every land.

From Prester John the lily elephant
Bare shells and incense of the imperial East,
Cathaian ivories, gums of Garamant,
Tall plumes of estrich, fells of spotted beast,

With stuffs of Baldack and of Babylon
All in a golden tower enfortaliced.

And, twixt the seas of Caspian Amazon
Where Alisaunder wrought the Walls of Weird
Athwart the gateways of Mount Caucason,
With caitiff howling Magog shrank afeard
Into his hollows, where on Antichrist
Ever he raveth, rending his red beard.

The Paynim Soudans, leagued in solemn tryst
From Nile to Tars, from Tars to Trebisound,
Dismayed forgat their hoary feuds and kissed,
And at their altars grovelled all discrowned ;
To Belsabuk, Mahound and Apolyn
Shrieking vain curses on the Table Round !

Then, too, by faery, venturous wight could win
Beneath the moonled swaying of the waves,
The crystal marches of the deep within ;
And Arthur's name among the twilight caves

Would scare the Grendel to her coral brake,
And cow the fell sea-unicorns like slaves !
The Damsels of the Waters for his sake
Bade summon all their gruesome treasurers,
Orc, Kraken, and immeasurable Snake,
To delve from out their whirl-pit sepulchres
The peerless hoards of immemorial wreck
Whelmed o'er with bones of old-world mariners—
Gem-talismans once gorgeous on the neck
Of queens of Tarshish—Idol's eyes of Ind,
And moneys minted by Melchizedek.

And, past the deep sea-dungeons of the wind,
The Pilgrim heard the Hell-stream cataracts boom
Within the abyss by flames eternal mined
Through ice eternal to the chasm of doom :—
“ Arthur ! ” he cried—one moment Hell was still,
And “ Arthur ! ” echoed through the seething gloom !
Yea, and yet onward through the midnight chill
Of desolate wastes beyond, where dawn is none,

Erewhile rejoicing to the Holy Hill
Through God's dear grace unspotted knight hath won,
And all the mystery of the Gates hath seen ;
Where o'er-against the birthstead of the sun
The bulwarks glow of Paradise Terrene—
The walls of jasper, sardonyx, and pearl
With golden mortar molten in between :
The crystal-carven canopies a-curl
With emerald sprays of passion-flower and vine,
And garnet grapes and topaz tendril whorl :
The doors of starry diamond, with a twine
Of sapphire hinges cusped with chrysoprase
And ruby studs and knops of almondine :—
And, all opaque against the liquid blaze,
Central, with sword and balance, helm and greave,
The Archangel-champion, crowned with awful rays ;
Leftward Our Lady, whispering sweet reprieve
To sinful father Adam, and to right
Her Son, the Healer, comforting sad Eve.
Yea, erst such marvel cheered the Pilgrim Knight,

And ever about the Eternal Doors, like doves,
Or poised or fluttered a celestial flight

Of Angels chanting in the trellised groves
Of crest and corbel, cope and capital ;

Flashing sweet sheen among the fretted coves
And depths of amethystine interval

In gabled eaves of niche and pinnacle,
Or basking in fair alleys on the wall.

And one from forth the blissful citadel
Would hover toward the Palmer as he prayed,

With gift of water from the Fourfold Well
Whence flow the streams of Eden, so allayed

With sovran virtue, that three drops alone
Make whole all deadliest dint of mortal blade,

And bade him bear to Arthur on his throne
That living token of immortal grace

Stopped in a cruse of hieroglyphic stone.

So sang the poet in his pride of place,

And Arthur bade the pages plenish well

The cups of all the kings with wine of race,
Osaye or Algarde, Rhenish or Rochell,
Vernage of Venice, Rhodes or Famagust,
Sweet Malvoisie or Cretan Muscadel,—
And pledged them all with outstretched arm august.
Then to the lordly singer of his name,
Still standing, he bade bear as guerdon just
A bugle carved in tusk of hippotame,
And whale's-bone comb in casket of red gold.

So sang the poet, and his songs were fame,
For fame was truth, and true the tales he told,
For men believed them : All are falsehood now,
For faith is lost alike in new and old.

Yea, even high achievements, such as plough
Their record deepest in men's memories
Are true no longer. Lo, as none knows how
The splendour faileth out of sunset skies,
When on the long capes of the cloudland bay

Like foam from seas of light the glory lies,
Yet ere we mark it gloameth into grey,—
So Truth hath died in talk at bench and board,
And Preacher's holy lore and Poet's lay.

Yea, men no more durst speak the manly word,
But waste their wit in woman jest and jeer ;
And courtly things that strut and wear a sword
Whisper to high-born dame, and crouch and leer
And sneer a double meaning to the tale
No loyal knight could tell nor maiden hear.
Even in council, clad in useless mail,
They gibe and chatter, each in fooling phrase
Girding at other till their lips are pale
With such small wrath as in emasculate days
May vent itself in slander and be safe.
We have forgotten knightly words and ways,
When gentle Chieftain at a glance would chafe,
And at a hinted slur clap hand to hilt.
Honour is dead and Courtesy a waif
None cares to treasure, now no blood is spilt

To prove its value. Lie and give the lie,
And the lewd world will laugh away the guilt !
Nor man nor woman now with stedfast eye
Shall scathe the craven slanderer for his pains !

Our dames are worthy of our chivalry.—

In their dull eyne a nightshade philtre feigns
A fire unfelt and fondness not their own :
Wan cheeks are flushed, unvermeiled of the veins,
And brows disfurnished flaunt a spangled loan
Of saffron tress in pearl-y-fretted caul.—
Now languid beauty luxeth her green zone
Starry with ouches on her purpled pall,
And, whitely shuddering o'er the lees of lust,
Clencheth her teeth and fingers to recall
How frolic erst she quaffed the foamy must :
Yet doth she publish still as sumptuously
Her lavish bosom blanched with pearly dust :
Still with the smile which love ne'er lived to see,
Wooeth in vain a withered knight to wait
And loop a posied loveknot at her knee.

There is a dreadful secret in the State—

A secret bruited at the Market-cross
And blased by every lazar at the gate ;

Such secret as the gleeman's wit makes gross
To wipe a tally off the ale-wife's score,
Or earn a pandar's penny by his gloss.

Lo, where she standeth by the Castle-door,

The Weaver of the Secret—mid a band
Of idling courtiers, dame and paramour,—

Our queen, Ginevra ; on her dainty hand
A tercel gentle with a silken jess.—

There in the sun Dame Meliot sees her stand,
Scans her from head to foot, and falls to guess

How many marks might buy the violet hood
Reversed with ermines on her auburn tress.—

Sir Dinadan lets loose his fooling mood
And prates how old-world beauty wont to smile,—
Elayne of Troy and that sweet Moor who wooed

Heroes and aspics to her breast by Nile,—
Judith and Cressid,—the fair queen who died
For Duke Eneas, and the dame whose wile
Saddled and bridled for a summer ride
The Sage who thought to tame Olympia's son—
Panthasilee and 'Theseus' warrior-bride,—
Swears that of all the bevy never a one
Was half so queenly, half so fair as she !

And one with narrow eyes that durst meet none,
Makes felt the prying which she cannot see,
Like a chill draught the casement chinks between :
Mordred—and chews on treason yet to be.
He, born of love where love should never have been,
Is Arthur's first-born—why not Arthur's heir ?
Ginevra is Arthur's, why not Mordred's queen ?
No mother she to Mordred ! Wherefore spare,
When he may smite with one avenging stroke
His father's crime, and win a queen so fair ?—
A parricide ?—Nay, but the sire first broke

The laws of kind ! Vengeance in kind were
meet !

Is she not Lancelot's love ? She could revoke
Her love for Arthur—were't not doubly sweet
To reign Sir Lancelot's Lancelot, in her grace ?—
Thus the black pulses of the false heart beat.

But other twain who gaze upon her face
Are sick with other fancies. Lancelot one—
That other, Arthur—each a little space
Baring his sorrow to the May-day sun.
O, but the look within Sir Lancelot's eyes !—
He who of old hath dived with Death, and won
The life he freely staked on his emprise,
Ever thereafter beareth in his look
The mark of one who hath read mysteries :
But here beside that sign as in a book
Is writ the tragedy of love—such love
As weaveth its own shame, yet cannot brook

The eternal doom, to wear the weft it wove !

Yea, and yet more ! Look on his cheek again :—
Along the furrows which his madness drove

So deeply there, have tears not flowed in vain ?
Tears to which those of widows o'er the dead

Ere nine days' bridal are as summer rain ?
But now those eyelids have no tears to shed !—

He looks upon the Dame who is his fate,
Yet hath no worship for the white and red,
Love-lustrous eyne and queenly grace of gait,
And lips the world were once well lost to win.

He never knew such passion as may sate
Its yearnings and forget that it hath bin—

His was the love that, daring all things, dares
Interminable sequences of sin—

And dying, leaves its office to its heirs,
Remorse and ruth and duty. Love, erewhile,

Was lavish in observances and cares,
And none are stinted,—Love, to earn a smile,

Would spend its heart's blood on a hopeless quest :

And, though the guerdon can no more beguile,

He still woos death as freely to his breast,

With every due devoir of champion knight.

Yea, not the smallest point of love's behest

In hall and bower but is fulfilled aright.

The Temple is as stately as before :

There is no change, no lacking to the sight—

Only behind the Veil, where once of yore

Within the Holy of Holies, in the Ark,

By wings of Cherubs warded evermore,

Love's own Shekinah dwelt, now burns a spark

Of liquid hell-fire ! All else is the same—

Even the light—but that which lights the dark

No longer is the glory of The Name !

There is no madness in the grief that ploughs

The front of Arthur, but the searing flame

Followed no less the share athwart his brows.—

True king from crown to spur, within his eye

Where royally 'mid high ambitions, house

The sage's lore and the knight's chivalry,
Lurk adders of inevitable sting.

'Tis nothing that his time draws near to die :
'Tis long since death hath seemed a dreadful
thing,

And he who did forebode it, told no less
Of days when Arthur should again be king.—

Death simply were an end of weariness,
Were't not he knoweth that it comes as doom

Of sin unspeakable in youth's excess.
Not yet he knoweth how nor when shall bloom

That deadly seed he sowed within his life,
Whose ripeness is the fruitage of the tomb ;

Yet even now the shadows of the strife
Fall on him from its leaves—and there be moods

In which he knows he hath no friend nor wife ;
And hinting doubts and treacherous likelihoods

Like night-mared children wake and cry aloud.
Yet speaks he not the grief o'er which he broods :

He will believe not. “Nay, she is too proud,

Too pure, too loving ! Never have I seen
In her true eyes the trouble and the cloud—
No shame—no wish unworthy such a queen !
And he, Sir Lancelot—shall my weakness wrong
Mine own knight peerless ? Why, the time hath been
When, had he been less loyal-souled than strong,
He might have won her when myself lay low,
And all the realm made glad his bridal song !
Yea, had he been less true, it hath been so
A thousand times.—Yet, not as wronging them,
But testing mine own conscience—say, I know
The twain are guilty—how shall I condemn ?
I, by the side of whose transcendent crime
Theirs were a mud-smirch on a kirtle-hem ?
Nay ! I do wrong them ! These my fancies chime
Too truly with that frenzy of mine youth !
'Tis I, whose soul hath wallowed in the slime,
Whose thoughts pollute the cleanness of their
truth !”
Thus museth he—too sad, too pure to own
Even to himself he knows the secret sooth !

And Thou, fair Curse of Empire on his throne !

Hath that proud nostril known no penitence ?

O subtly double nature ! each alone

As true as truest music to the sense—

Together both in discord intervals

Jangling a double falsehood and offence !

Yea, false to Arthur and Lancelot false,

Thou'rt true to Lancelot and to Arthur true !

Queen never queenlier stept in Camelot's halls,

Leman more loving Joyous-Gard ne'er knew !

Red as the life-blood, as the snowdrift white,

The twin loves each from other wrests his due ;

And even as now the king's most royal right

At knighthood's feet the imperious pulses fling,

That empire's daughter, mated with the knight,

Had treasured her last fondness for the king !

Thine is the star of even and of morn !

A childless Eve, thy loves for children bring

Two offerings at two altars—blood and corn :

Cain's garden-ransom of primeval sin

And Abel's firstling of the flocks unshorn !

Yea, even thus did Death at first begin,
And thus begins our own ! Nay, Death for her
Already hath made desolate all within,
Yet left her beauty for its sepulchre.—

Dream ye she knows not how she hath grown old,
Or that the Mays in fleeting can confer

The peaceful pulses of a heart grown cold ?
Nay, the late summer of her years reveals

Secrets of passion which the spring ne'er told !
Burns her with threefold thirst, yet, mocking, seals

The springs of joy and leaves the witchcraft stale
'Could once have freed them ! Think you not she feels

That little spout of hell-fire through the veil
Within the temple of Sir Lancelot's love ?

Think you her eyes are seared not with the bale
Of cloven flames her own twin arks above ?

Yea, Arthur's court is Arthur's court no more,

And none have heart to strive as once they strove.
All high emprise is crushed and crusted o'er

With ruin wrought by false and feeble wills,
And the whole realm is smitten at the core
With restless boding of suppremer ills.

So have we heard Sicilian palmer tell
Of quaking homesteads in the cloven hills,—
Of muttered warnings in the Demon Dell
And dreary levin flickering on the snow
That crests the hollow heights of Mongibell.—
While o'er the sulphurous cauldron gathering slow
The swart reek waxeth like a cedar tree
O'ershadowing half the welkin ; and below
The whole isle groaneth—woodland, waste, and lea.
Till on a starless night, with rending flash
Of fury flaring into skies and sea,
Far through the clouds the fiery fountains crash
Of chaos spouted from abysmal wells :
And in the mountain-crucible' a gash
Of blinding brightness gapeth on the dells,
Whence forth in thundery ruin o'er the verge,

Bursting the shattered gateways of the fells,
Far through the pinewood swoops the smolten surge.
The belted oaks a league before its tread
Shudder and writhe like slaves beneath the scourge,
Ere long to die the death !—A ghastly red
Looms through the reek among their smouldering
leaves,
And, clogged with craggy dross, the fires of dread
Flood round the blazing trunks. The woodland
heaves,
And all the staggering mountain-side aflame
Slides to the plain among the ungarnered sheaves,
Vineyard and thorp and city of old name.—
Vainly inviolate all a summer's day
The wall Cyclopian holds its ancient fame !
Round scarp and bulwark, tower and buttress-stay
Fathom on fathom, fiercelier swells and beats
The weltering fireflood with its stony spray !
One rending yawn, and through the desert streets
The white walls float upon the deadly wave

That whelms for aye those old imperial seats !—

Thence, five-fold cloven, scarce with might to pave
With fire the fig-tree shades and groves of palm.

The grim flood loiters to its ocean-grave,
And the old world resumeth its old calm :

Though far o'er-sea, the Maltese anchorite
Mid hail of ashes, stints his morning psalm

And Northward peers into the mist till night
For the next sign of Judgment to begin.

So fares our kingdom now, for Arthur's might
Quakes to the base, fire-sapped by kingly sin :—

A footfall jarring scarce enough to shake
One withered blossom from the jessamin

More than enough beneath our feet to wake
The doom we wait for from its slumberings,

And loose the fountains of the burning lake.

The world is old—and still the mavis sings.

We wait the doom—yet on the hawthorn-spray

The nightingale remembers the old springs.

May-morn itself is weary of the May,

Yet, careless of the wreck of realms and kings,

The homeless cuckoo jeereth all the day.

TRANSLATIONS.

ACHILLES' ISLAND.



ACHILLES' ISLAND.

IN Philostratus' Heroicks, a certain Vintager or Winegrower of Elëus, in Thracia, feigneth the Ghost of Protesiläus the Heroe, to be his special good Lord and Patron, for indeed the whole neighbourhood was believ'd under the same protection ; and taketh occasion of a Phœnician merchant travelling that way, to discourse with him of sundry matters, which he declareth himself to have heard from Protesiläus' lips in regard to the divine Homer, his Iliads and Odysseys.

Among the rest, he falleth to talk of Achilles' Island in such manner as I have here set down, though 'tis evident he knew not the true situation of that Island, which is over against the Cursus Achillëius, very far remov'd from the Palus Mœotis, whereof he maketh the waves to beat against it ; in which, belike, he erred,

having some confus'd knowledge of a promontory Achillëium in the jaws of the Bosphorus Cimmerius, betwixt the Pontus Euxinus and the Palus Mœotis, of which the same may in a manner be said.

And, whereas, I have here rhymed what Philostratus' Vintager doth set forth in plain prose, save only the Song of Achilles, I might allege the example of my excellent good master, M. Ben Jonson, of whom I here profess myself the youngest disciple and of least account, who hath stuck not to put into verse whole speeches of Tully in his Catiline ; yet I think 'twill be granted that the matter here delivered is mere poetical, and may therefore justly wear the garment that best fitteth with his intention.

S. E.

In Pontus, toward the inhospitable side
Which larboard looms to mariners that ride
Through the Cimmerian Strait, an Island lies,
Lonely among the waves, of no great size :

Long, thirty stades, and wide scarce more than four,
With trees thereon down to the very shore,
Poplar and elm and other, most at will
And wild, but round the Temple ranged with skill.

The Temple gives on the Mæotic lake,
Whose lusty waves upon the one side break,
As Pontus on the other. There within,
Cunningly carven, the two statues bin
Of Helen and Achilles, by the Fates
Join'd everlastingly ; for these two mates
Held Love so lively imaged in their eyes
That poets thence did first of love devise.
But first by th' eye to them love did not come,
For she in Egypt, he in Ilium
Dwelt each from other far, but not the less
Each learn'd to long the other to possess :
For now so sweetly did all poets sing
Before them of that love which had its spring

In their own eyes, that their ears therewithal
Begot desire of bliss corporeal.

Yet fitting for their love was no place found,
For they could live not on unholy ground
Their life compacted of eternity ;
And not off Ilium was an island free,
Nor unpolluted were th' Echinades
Nigh CEnias and th' Acarnanian seas,
For there Alcmaëon, forlorn matricide,
Vext by th' Erinnyes last his guilt did hide,
And tilled those islands newer than his crime
Built for the nonce of th' Achelöian slime.*
So to Poseidon then did Thetis pray
That he would lift an Island to the day

* For that Alcmaëon having slain his mother, all lands were thereupon cursed in which he should harbour. But the Oracle bade him go thither where the land had been made after his mother's murder, and was therefore uncursed, which land found in the islands Echinades at the mouth of the Achelöus, made of the late-dried mud of that river.

Out of the deep, that they therein might dwell.
He heard her praying, and remembering well
Pontus' wide watery waste, and that no isle
Lying therein, the mariners erewhile
Had ploughed the waters without harbourage
Wherein to shelter from the wild wind's rage,
Above the billows brought this isle to light,
Leuce its name, for that the sands were white,
Wherein Achilles and his dame might dwell,
And wanderers of the sea might haven well.

Thus he, the Lord of th' universal world
Of waters, marking what huge floods are hurled
All into Pontus,—how Borysthenes,
Ister, and Hypaciris, and to these
Halys, Thermōdon and Parthenias
Unendingly, unmeasurably pass
Into the deeps, down rolling with their streams
Gravels and clays washt from the diademes

Or of Carinthian or Armenian hills
Or those high lands which the wise Scythian tills,
Did gather of these sands and fashion them
Into this island, shoring it to stem
All tempests, founded firm on Pontus' floor.

•

Here for the first time, on this island shore
Achilles saw his Helen and she him,
And felt each other's beauty limb to limb.
Hoary Poseidon, Amphitrite came,
And all the Nereids, all that men may name
Of Rivers and of Demons such as be
About Mœotis and the Pontic sea,
To grace the triumph of their bridal day.

Here dwell, moreover, in this isle, men say,
White water-fowl and smelling of the brine,
Which for his use Achilles doth design ;
For with the breezy wafting of their wings
They do refresh his grove, and from sweet springs

Sprinkle the fainting leaves as they fly low
Above the earth and hover to and fro.

Nor is this island yet so holy soil
But that the weary mariners who toil
Over the yawning billows there may land,
For like a welcome hearth it seems to stand
To 'tice their ships to linger there awhile.
But once to sleep or house within the isle
Is sacrilege to the seafaring man,
Or be he Hellene or Barbarian.
For they who there have disembark'd, and done
Due sacrifice, must go ere set of sun
Again on board, nor lie the night ashore ;
And if the wind be astern, set sail once more :
If not, they must with hawsers make all fast
And rest them in their hold till night be past.

For then Achilles with his Helen sups,
Pouring out nectarous wine in golden cups ;

'And give themselves to Poesy, and sing
The love between them ; words, too, on the wing
Let fly by Homer, and old songs of Troy,
And Homer's self ; for still Achilles' joy
It is to wield the gift of poesy
Which came to him from fair Calliope,
And now he can of mystery deeper far
In this recess and leisure from all war.

One song Protesiläus, he that is
My patron Spirit, for all I am is his,
Hath heard him sing and learnt it as he sung :
For many a pilgrim from Achilles' tongue
Swears he hath heard a thousand chanted things
Of prophecies and obscure oraclings,
Such as I skill not of. But this he made
Last year, and sang, and as he sang, he played
A gracious music the green trees among
Upon his golden strings. Thus flows the song :

ACHILLES' SONG.

Echo, who dost ever sit
By the waters infinite
Of great Pontus on the strand,
Lo, my harp under my hand
Psalmeth loud a song to thee !
Echo, sing thou unto me !
Sing me Homer the divine,
And his glory, which is mine :
He, the glory of men, for us
Hath made travail glorious :
'Tis through him I have not died,
And Patroclus doth abide :
Ajax mine through verse of his
Equal to the Immortals is ;
And through verse of his a Troy
Which no leaguer-ships destroy
Hath been builded fairer far
Than all mortal cities are,
And for after-poets' skill
Ilion is unfallen still.



POEMS

BY

JEAN CHARLIER DE GERSON,

“DOCTOR CHRISTIANISSIMUS,”

Chancellor of the University of Paris.

(Born 1363. Died 1429.)

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN.

HOC AGE !

WHATE'ER the lot to which God calleth thee,
There work, content ! Set not thy soul agape
In envious thirst thy life anew to shape !
All things not thine let be !

Deal they with them to whom is given their care !
Toil not to woo a doom that is not sent !
Prithee, to thine own self be competent,
Nor grudge another's share !

Something of sorrow, pain, and weariness
Each lot contains, to other lots unknown ;
Trust thine experience ! Use and wont alone
Can make that burden less.

His aching side the feverish sick man throws

To right, to left, some place of ease to win—
Lies prone, supine. In vain ! The hurt within
Still bars him from repose !

Howe'er he lie, the bed feels hard and sore :—

But let the fever in his bones be healed,
Health gives the quiet nought beside can yield,
And he can rest once more.

God of His gifts enough is prodigal,

So thou but use aright ! A thankful heart
Bring thou to Him, and bearing well thy part,
Bestow a boon on all !

PRAISE OF THE LIFE MONASTIC.

THE Convent life that doth enthrall
Herself within the cloister wall,
Dead to the world, whose iron sway
She cannot bear, flees fast away
And leaves its pomps and shows behind,
To reign an empress o'er the mind,
And build within her narrow cell
A heavenly palace-citadel.
The glory of an empty name,
The prate, the lies, the charms of fame,
Delight her not ; nor witching tale
Of treacherous hope can aught prevail,
But shrinkingly she shroudeth her
Far from the tumult and the stir,

The trembling hopes and feverish cares
That haunt the city-thoroughfares.

But fierce the hurricane of strife
Unceasing beats on Public Life,
Which, feeble as it is, makes shift
Others on its own back to lift,
Whose follies, crimes, and hates and greeds,
And wraths and wounds and murderous deeds
It bears upon its thorny way.

Now make strict count with Reason ! Say
What bargain 'tis for such a boon
To waste a lifetime, spent so soon,
On perilous hazards such as these ?
Within, what frets to tempt and tease !
How fell the worm that gnaws the heart !
Without, what trifles dance and dart !
What draughts the sickening sense must drain
Of cruel wrong, of shame and pain !
What bitter envies fire the soul !
What deadly wrath, what dreary dole !

What pallid shudderings of disgust
Cloyed with the loathsome lees of lust !

Were it not better far to choose
To shut death's windows, then, and use
The inner sense alone, to find
Things heavenly, with a spotless mind
Which flees the care, remorse and doubt
That haunt the worldly life without ?

Yea, such a soul, beyond the strife
Sees death become the gate of life ;
Jesus, in whom she lives and moves,
Is all her hope ; yet well she loves
His saints, and reverent, trusts to share
Both in their merits and their prayer.

THE ENIGMA SOLVED.

SEEST thou yon Sun in lustrous glory beaming,
Shedding the rays of his unchanging essence
With the same tenor evermore outstreaming ?
How can he shroud him, niggard of his presence ?

How can he choose, but with his force far-reaching,
Shine on the world in plenitude supernal ?
'Tis the same law the dreams of elder teaching
Feign to coerce the Almighty and Eternal !

"Free," prate the Schools, "how free, the Force that
acteth

Even as it must, not wills, on mind and matter ?
Free, when it never addeth nor subtracteth,
Fixed in perpetual Law that nought can shatter ?

If then Foreknowledge thus in Fate be folden,
What thanks are due? and who is He that wants
 them?

What be His blessings? Why are we beholden?
'Tis but because He cannot choose He grants them !

What are thy prayers? Wilt turn by supplication
Him who remains the same from everlasting?"
Down, down, delusive doubt ! Faith's desolation,
Sapping her fanes, her holy altars blasting !

Shall the Creator need in any measure
Aught of the creature—praises or devotion?
'Tis enough praise that at His will and pleasure,
He, without moving, giveth all things motion !

DE PROFUNDIS.

No common mariner is he
Who, caught upon the trackless deep,
When wind and rain and driving sweep
Of tempest down-rush o'er the sea

Swoop sudden, with a boding roar
Of present doom and death and wreck,
Still calmly fearless, treads the deck,
And plies his trusty pilot-lore.

No dastard palsy numbs his hand,
His ready brain is helpful still ;
And every sleight of seaman skill
He strains to bring his ship to land.

But if so fierce and fell the flaw
That not a hope can cleave the dark,
And Scylla, deafening with her bark,
Drags all within her ravening maw—

If headlong, thwarting help with haste,
His mates but woo the seas to whelm
The pilot snoring at the helm,
Even such an one must stand aghast !

No more he trusts his sturdy limbs :
His hope hath failed in lore of lode :
He looks to Heaven and prays to God,
Then plunges to the deep, and swims.

If haply, naked from the sea,
He reach some rock or kindly cave ;
“ ’Tis Thou,” he cries, “ my soul dost save,
To live more thankful, Lord, to Thee ! ”

O Christ, may I, thus rescued here,
To holier, humbler grace attain !
Or if Thou giv'st the helm again,
Grant me a happier course to steer !

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.

ANGELS of Peace, if aught of sorrow reach ye,
Bid the full sweep of your intelligences
Make bitter groaning ! You, ye skies, re-echo !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Pallas, her church, home, citadel and refuge,
Yea, your delight, the wide world's grace and glory,
Lie by the slaves of crime all gulfed together !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Lo, from the founts of Helicon out-welling,
Rivers of blood ! Forth wing the holy Muses,
Far-fleeting, headlong, sorrowfully shrieking :
Weep ye for Pallas !

Hark to the magpie chatter of the ribalds,
 Stung by a livid hate to jubilation,
 Lovers of evil, over our complaining !

Weep ye for Pallas !

Sacred Assembly, toiling with incessant
 Study to perfect the Divine Minerva,
 Wail ! Beat thy bosom, crying to the people,

Weep ye for Pallas !

Never of old time fell thy learned maidens,
 Pallas Athene, with a fall so ghastly !
 This lot is worst ! Ye wooers all of wisdom,

Weep ye for Pallas !

Thou, O thou College ! Thou, renowned and peerless,
 Who that beholds thee dedicate to frenzy,
 Molten to pity, shall not cry above thee,

Weep ye for Pallas !

Threefold the order fully that adorned thee,
Erst with a comely coign of priests ! Thou liest
Wrecked by the foul hand of the ruffian many !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Madness ! O lion's rage ! in grisly fellness
Passing all crime unspeakable by tyrants
Wrought in all ages ! Lo, Erinnyes raveth !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Ah, savage horror ! Nothing safe henceforward,
Nothing undared remaineth ! Resteth only
Now for things human to dissolve and perish !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Who shall be bold 'gainst heresy hereafter ?
Who but shall tremble to withstand the guilty ?
Who shall be fain to teach the paths of virtue ?
Weep ye for Pallas !

Father, who style supreme of Christ's Vice-gerent
 Hearest, and ye too, Cardinal world-hinges,
 Weep, for the Column of the Faith lies shattered !

Weep ye for Pallas !

Thou, too, O King, bethink thee ! Lo, thy daughter,
 Mother of children, all too fair and fruitful,
 Childless and widowed mourneth her, and plaineth,

Weep ye for Pallas !

Realm, once of glory, thy illustrious teacher,
 She, who the name of Christian bore for blazon,
 Wallows in shame among her spawn of monsters !

Weep ye for Pallas !

Weep, all ye laws, and arts, and skill of healing !
 Flood ye your cheeks, ye sciences, with weeping !
 Reft of the band of students once around ye !

Weep ye for Pallas !

Pallas ! the rape of thy custodian image
Doomed, we have read, of old Troy town to ruin !
Trembling for France, and dreading like disaster,
Weep ye for Pallas !

Churchman and soldier keep the social compact
Each for the other ! Lo, the churchman suffers
Soldiers to watch and ward thy desolation !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Heir of the kingly sceptre, we beseech thee,
Dauphin renowned, yea, thus in songs of sorrow,
Build up these ruins, strown by murderous foemen !
Weep ye for Pallas !

Happy, yea, four times happy he, and blessed,¹
He who shall seek to renovate their glories,
Hushing to peace this cry of dolorous wailing,
Weep ye for Pallas.

MANIFOLD MARTYRDOM.

'THE martyr's death ! more glorious prize
No mortal wish may win !
Unchristened ? This the font supplies,
And cleanseth every sin !

'Tis martyrdom in Faith's high cause
A manly death to dare :
And doth not Faith embrace the laws
The Sacred Books declare ?

Yea, blessed then each warrior soul
Still battling called to rest ;
Howe'er he die, who keepeth whole
His God's supreme behest !

If martyr-crowned for zeal may stand
Those Seven, their blood unspilt,
Was John not Martyr when he banned
The queenly harlot's guilt?

Yea, live ye blessed, ye for whom
Crime plies her ghastliest rites,
Whom, led to public martyrdom,
The ruthless headsman smites !

O death, to God how fair and proud
Thy joy and glory show !
Though foul and fell, the mocking crowd
Spit on the victim's throe !

And is this age the happier, say,
To boast its martyr-throng,
Or more accurst, to mourn the sway
Of darkling despots' wrong ?

Curst ! for, transformed to wolves by greed,

Our ravening shepherds rove,

And only mask to nurse and feed

The tyranny they love !

Jesu, Thy Father's Truth ! Thy grace

For happier times we pray !

These slaughter-stains of blood efface

From Truth's triumphal way !

But wouldst Thou still Thy martyr host

Should blaze her triumph wide,

The Father and the Holy Ghost

With Thee be glorified !

THE PEACE OF GOD THAT PASSETH ALL
UNDERSTANDING.

A BOON exceeding great it is ;
A boon thou know'st is inward bliss,
But mayst not tell in outward speech.
In truth, the Old Man cannot reach
The lore whose taste so charms the New.
This is the hidden manna true
That only feeds the inmost sense.
Dost ask its savour, what and whence ?
Vain question ! vain the listening ear !
Taste first, and all shall then be clear !
The old man seeketh far afield
The blessing which at home revealed
His younger brother learns to find.
Lo, Jonathan erewhile was blind :
He tastes the honey and he sees !
And honey sweeter than the bee's
Is God to us, wherewith we may
Take this world's poisonous taste away.

A MYSTIC EPITHALAMIUM,

ON THE MARRIAGE OF THEOLOGUS AND THEOLOGIA,
UNDER THE NAMES OF JACOB AND RACHEL.

Rachel.

SPEAK, by the hinds and roes upon the mountains,
Speak, by the holy fires of love I pray thee,
Pray thee by Holy Faith, her grace and honour,
Jacob, dost love me ?

Jacob.

Yea, by these flocks and these our lambs among them,
Yea, by the green and pleasant willow-thicket,
Yea, by the crystal clearness of the fountains,
Rachel, I love thee !

I, by God's will born dweller in the pastures,
Only appointed warden of the sheep-fold,
Though thou be noble, graced with lofty titles,
Rachel, I love thee !

Mirror all-gracious of the light eternal,
Mightily woman, all thy bridegroom's beauty,
Beaming on all in loveliness majestic,
Rachel, I love thee !

Trusting in thee, o'er frozen Alpine summits
Safe shall I pass, and through Numidian whirl-pits,
Nothing aghast at Scylla nor Charybdis,
Rachel, I love thee !

Though through the rent sky roar the crashing thunder,
Yea, though the round world shudder to the centre,
Still, in the brunt of that so ghastly peril,
Rachel, I love thee !

Nothing shall tear me from thy calm embraces,
Nought can betide to make me fear hereafter !
None other love shall fetter me, for always,
Rachel, I love thee !

Fruitful the womb of Leah, yea, and many
Be mine handmaiden's children—yet I know not,
Something in thee more beautiful allures me.
Rachel, I love thee !

Peace and repose of spirit wait upon thee !
Nothing of sadness lingers as thou singest
Hymns with the Muses of entrancing sweetness !
Rachel, I love thee !

Shamefast and wise, the Ruler of the Egyptians,
Joseph is thine, and Benjamin thy youngest ;
Though in the birth of Benjamin thou diest,
Rachel, I love thee !

Kiss me ! Thy lips are chastity ! Ah, kiss me !
Clasp round my neck thy holy arms about me !
I for that bliss will cleave to thee for ever !

Rachel, I love thee !

Thine is the Holy Spirit, one yet many,
Thine are the blessed giftings of His virtues !
Filled are thy lovers with thy bliss for ever !

Rachel, I love thee !

HYMN TO THE VIRGIN.

HEAR us, Mary, Star of ocean !

Gentle Queen of heaven, be near us !

Over this world's wild commotion,

Mary, Maiden, stoop to hear us !

Welcome, Thou, whose worth could win Thee

Grace to carry God within Thee !

Welcome be Thou, Rose of roses !

Grace like Thine no rose discloses !

Thou the Rose that blossoms lonely !

Rose, whose title is the Only !

Lily, Thou, and Violet !

Welcome !

Thou than honeycombs art sweeter

To Thine own—to none art bitter !

Link Thee to our hearts in blessing !

Lift us up, our minds addressing,

Make us earthly toys forget !

Welcome, Thou, the springtide Eden,

Whence our vision, unforbidden,

Sees the Flower of Beauty swelling,

Sees the Fount of Love outwelling,

Yea, and all things blessed most.

Welcome, Nightingale, that flingest

Love around Thee as Thou singest !

Sweetness' self is in Thy voicing,

'Tis the praise of saints rejoicing,

Joy of all the Angel Host !

Welcome, crowned with roses blushing !

Crowned with every floweret's flushing !

Fairest, at the Throne almighty,

Pray Thine own sweet Son in pity

Grant the boon so dear that cost !

Amen !

SPRINGTIDE.

SPRINGTIDE is with us again ! Cheerily rouse thee,
Heart, with the winter's cold frostily lagging !
Up, like a bird on the wing ! Make her thy pattern,
Who in the warm sun afresh kindles her vigour,
With dulcet-resonant throat shaping her descant,
Interchanging the stops.—Yonder the skylark,
Lo, in the liquid air, poised on her pinions,
Soars scarce visibly on, scorning the lowlands.
Yea, rapt out of herself, drunken with music,
Joyous to talk with her God seemeth she, soaring :
Then drops, swooning, adown ! Now in accustomed
Haunts when she sinks to herself, sober abiding.

Heart, well is thee, if the kind ecstasy seize thee,
Happy, if thou from thyself tranced in rejoicing,
Dwellest not aye on the dull shores of existence.

ON HIS OWN POEMS.

(Written hardly twelve days before his death.)

QUOTH Envy, scoffing at my verse,
“What dowdy dress ! Could aught be worse ?
No tinge of crimson in her cheeks ;
And what a croak whene’er she speaks !”

If, wanting virtue, sense, and taste,
The tawdry quean love gauds and paste,
What wonder ? So she tempt her swine,
Her trappings are enough divine.
Her eyes on fire with drugs of bane,
And painted cheek and plastered mane,
The gadding, wheedling wanton waits
To slay the fools she captivates ;
But she, the matron, chaste and grave,
Fresh with the grace that Nature gave,

Studies how best her lord to please
In hallowed household ministries.
Well-taught her skilful hand to ply,
Linen nor woollen needs she buy :
'Mid modest maids their toil she shares,
And spins her clothes while they spin theirs.
Not wanton, peevish, sly, nor shrill
Her voice, but sweet with solemn thrill ;
And, bright with light from heaven, her eye
Beams on her children's piety.

At her most rich yet frugal board,
King David to his clavicord
Chanteth his hymns in numbers free,
Most dear to wayward minstrelsy.

Such songs I sing. Hence, pagan Muse !
Of Venus, Mars, and idol-crews,
Prate lies to itching ears ! Begone !
Sweet Jesus is my love alone !

Jesus !

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